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Vivian Gilbert

THE ROMANCE OF THE LAST CRUSADE

With Allenby to Jerusalem

By

MAJOR VIVIAN GILBERT

With Preface by

OWEN WISTER

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PREFACE

By a chance most fortunate I heard Major Vivian Gilbert tell the story which he has written here. When it was done, I was astonished to find that he had been talking for an hour; time had been quite forgotten, and I was ready to listen to him for as much longer as he might have been willing to speak. So have I, by certain firesides, sat enthralled while others from the Somme, or the Argonne, or Mesopotamia, made us forget time while they forgot themselves in narrating what they had seen and done; but this was in privacy: none have I heard who could hold an audience in public with a war tale as Major Gilbert did. Such tales should be told and should be set down. They serve to remind us of the greatness in man at a time when his littleness seems chiefly to the fore. They will serve the future, too, as documents.

Although printed words cannot convey the skill and variety of Major Gilbert's delivery—his easy modulations from something very serious to something very humorous—his lecture by no means depended upon the manner in which it was given; the matter from start to

finish was in itself so picturesque, so unusual, so admirably selected, as to remain vividly in the memory. No one who heard him is likely to have forgotten the camels, the prophecy about Jerusalem falling when the Nile should flow into Palestine, the imperishable episode of the keys of the city, and many another incident at which the reader of the following pages will pause and meditate, as he links this latest crusade with its predecessors across the centuries through which the world has passed since the days of Godfrey de Bouillon and his armored knights. It is a story worth telling, and well told.

OWEN WISTER.

Philadelphia.

TO AMERICAN BOYS

In the belief that reading it
may increase their friendship for England,
who gave so many of her sons to fight
for the freedom of the Holy Land,
this story of a great adventure
is affectionately
dedicated

Once Upon a Time

"Sire, only come hither and I will show you Jerusalem!" Thus spake the valiant knight, Sir Brian de Gurnay.

"Nay," replied King Richard of England, and he buried his face in his armour, tears were in his eyes, and with hands uplift to Heaven he exclaimed: "Lord God, I pray Thee that I may never see Thy Holy City, if so be that I may not rescue it from the hands of Thine enemies!" Then mounted Lord Richard his horse and rode from that place which was the Hill of Nebi Samwil, unto Acre, and Sir Brian rode with him, but in the heart of Sir Brian de Gurnay was the thought of another and a Last Crusade that for all time should wrest the Holy Places from the Infidel.

* * * * * * *

The book slipped from Brian's hand and fell on the mossy turf by his side. He drew a deep breath: the air tasted faintly of cowslips and

buttercups growing in luxuriant profusion in the meadows across the moat.

He stretched himself slowly and lazily, his straw hat tilted over his eyes. He did not trouble to put it straight. It was rather pleasant to dream away the hour that remained before tea would be ready.

The shadow of Ivythorne Manor stole gently across the old world garden, where the drone of summer insects, busy amongst the flowers, could be distinctly heard. The last words he had been reading still lingered in his memory like the notes of a favourite song. What wonderful times to live in, those days of chivalry and romance, when gallant knights of old adventured forth to free the Holy Land with great swords by their sides and great faith in their hearts!

Brian Gurnay was just down from his first year at Oxford, a typical product of the English public school; keen on games and sport of all kinds, and not by any means a fool with his work. Certainly when he had departed from Harrow for the last time to become a full-fledged undergraduate at Oxford University, his house master had inserted in his final report, "could have done better had he tried"; but then Brian

himself would have been the first to agree with this qualification had he been asked. He knew he could do better, but somehow it hardly appeared worth while; why?—he would have found it difficult to explain even to himself. Perhaps it was because there was no need to do better; an only son, scion of a wealthy county family, his place in the world was already mapped out for him, or so it seemed.

There were many boys like Brian in England in 1914, drifting into manhood with no settled purpose in life but a vague resentment at the apparent futility of existence. There is a section of the community which, having no profession or occupation, is forced to make a business of pleasure, and this often entails the hardest kind of work in the most exacting and unsatisfying trade in the world.

Brian imagined that the unimportant but large body of people known as "the masses" had been created by an all-wise Providence for the sole purpose of making things easy for the rich governing classes. He was not a snob because there was no need for him to be one; his place in society was assured, and he was not really conceited; he was too healthy-minded for that. But he came of a long line of Englishmen who

were accustomed to command, whose authority had not been questioned for centuries, and, as there was every reason to believe, never would be questioned.

He recognised "business men" as necessary evils; tradesmen kept shops which supplied his needs; if they failed in this, he patronized others. The people who served one seemed civil and law-abiding and in most cases very efficient. That all these people led lives that were as important to them as his own was to him, he never stopped to consider for a moment.

When he read stories of the Crusades, as he had been doing that afternoon, it was the leaders he thought of, and as it appeared, it was the leaders the authors thought of, too. It was of course necessary to have "men at arms." Wars cannot be fought without the rank and file, but one noticed that the only mention of them was when the number of casualties was given. One read so much of King Richard and the other kings and nobles, that it was difficult to realise the common soldiers were Crusaders, too, and had left their homes to fight in a great cause, even as the king had.

Brian pictured that historical scene at Nebi Samwil. The king surrounded by his valiant

knights, bronzed by the eastern sun, scarred and disfigured, but ennobled, too, by the wounds of countless brave encounters with the Saracen. The king had turned away discouraged but Sir Brian de Gurnay had dreamt of another crusade that would prove finally successful! The years had passed, crusade after crusade had been organised, equipped and sent out to overcome almost unheard-of difficulties, to go through adventures that made one's blood race through one's veins only to read about—but all these crusades had failed in their object! That "Last Crusade" had never taken place.

Brian stretched out his arms in supplication towards the clear blue sky, and partly in earnest, partly with the old words of the medieval book he had been reading still ringing in his head, exclaimed: "To fight in thy cause, to take part in that Last Crusade I would willingly leave my bones in the Holy Land! Oh, for the chance to do as one of these knights of old, to accomplish one thing in life really worth while!"

Even as he uttered the words he realised how ridiculous it all was to think that such a prayer could be granted in these prosaic days—July, 1914—when all the world was at peace and nothing could be further off than the clash of

arms, the call to battle. Really exciting adventures never took place nowadays; but nevertheless, make-believe was rather better than nothing, and in spite of his twenty years, there was much of the boy still left in him.

"Brian! Brian!"

His mother's voice, calling him from the house, penetrated through these day-dreams and brought him back to the actual things of life.

"All right, mother. Is tea ready?"

Slowly he got up, shook from his clothes the little particles of moss and grass that clung there, and picked up his hat that had rolled away. He was quite ready for tea. Really, after all, life was not so bad down in this quiet old backwater.

"Dear little mother," thought Brian as he sauntered across the lawn. Her voice always struck a chord in his inmost being: however trivial a thing she had to say it seemed important when she said it. Sons, whose fathers are dead, grow very close to their mothers, especially only sons. It is Nature's compensation, and he was not ashamed of his love for her, notwithstanding that, at that period of his development, public school ethics decreed that openly expressed affection for one's parent was not "good form."

Whenever they had been separated for any length of time the joy he had at meeting again was always a little clouded by sadness. She was so frail, so small, and yet somehow so big in all the things that mattered. At the back of his mind there was ever the thought: "If I should lose her?"

When his father had been stricken with illness he had been tremendously sorry. They were great pals, and when the malady terminated fatally, Brian felt the loss keenly. And yet he could not deny that right down within him was a secret thankfulness that his father had been taken and not his mother; he was almost glad for this reason that it was his father that had died. Some sons are like that. In mitigation of the loss of his father had been the ever closer drawing together of his mother and himself. She depended on him for so much and was so helpless when he was not by her side to advise.

This companionship was very dear to Brian and he wished he did not feel this uneasiness when he saw her, or heard her voice. It was as a cloud on the horizon of his inner consciousness that warned him of what some day would come nearer.

Lady Mary held a copy of *The Daily Telegraph* in her hand. She wore a simple dress of some soft dark material and had thrown a lace scarf around her shoulders. Framed in the old stone doorway, the dimness of the hall beyond threw into relief her snow-white hair, giving it the semblance of a halo. She was short-sighted, and Brian noticed how the light in her eyes grew as he approached within her vision.

"Such news in the London paper," she said. "Come in, Brian, you must read it at once. It seems there is to be a great war. I can hardly believe it."

In a few steps Brian was by her side. "Why, little mother, what are you talking about?" he said as he drew nearer. "A great war! Have you been dreaming, too?"

He took the paper from her hand. As he turned to the daylight to read it, she clung to his arm. He felt her hands tremble a little, and that awkward, choky feeling come into his throat. It always did when any little action or look of hers reminded him of how delicate she was.

The paper was already folded back, and Brian read the headlines aloud: "Russia mobilising. Danger of clash between France and Germany. Will England declare war?"

He did not stop to read more. Something told him that he had reached the shadowy crossroads we all meet at some time in our lives. Slowly he put his arm round his mother and led her into the hall. In his left hand he still held the paper, hard and crisp to the touch; with his other hand he felt the soft, silky lace of her scarf. How little and bent her shoulders seemed with his strong young arm about them!

A gentle breeze that had sprung up stole into the age-worn stone hall, and like some elfin sprite, shook the tapestries hanging there, faint needlework pictures of bygone wars. Brian had prayed for a Last Crusade, to take his place in some present-day band of warriors fighting for a great cause.

His appeal had only been partly in earnest. Was this news in the paper the answer? He had wanted to break out of the cage which held him, a cage whose bars were love and solicitude and peaceful security. Now into this little sleepy corner of the world the word had come that Europe was arming—soon England, too, perhaps.

Strange thoughts began to chase each other through his brain: he almost fancied the blood

that had come down to him from Sir Brian de Gurnay was mounting to his head: his eyes shone and he held his mother to him. Her hand trembled still, but Brian felt somehow his prayer was going to be answered, and he was glad.

CHAPTER I.

The Theatre.

I was an actor playing in New York the summer of 1914. I stood in Times Square, wedged in with hundreds of others, that fateful day in August when the words, "England declares war," were flashed on the temporary screen that faced Broadway. People cheered and hats were thrown into the air, but I did not cheer myself. I was up against a problem which for the moment I could not solve. Here I was, over three thousand miles from England and under contract for the American run of the most successful play of the season; it all required some thinking out. One thing was certain, however, this declaration of war by England meant my recall and that I must get back home as quickly as possible.

That night I sat in my dressing-room at the theatre and smeared grease paint over my face. I carefully placed the imitation pink carnation in my buttonhole as usual before making my first entrance on the stage as *Alaric* in "Peg o' My Heart," but my thoughts were far away

in England. Only a few short weeks ago I had said good-bye to my people with lively anticipations of a successful theatrical season in America, and in a moment, or so it seemed, the stage, with its glamour and applause, its rewards and disappointments, appeared curiously small and unimportant. I realised that for the first time in my life, perhaps, the opportunity had come to do real work in the world, a *man's* work! I could with safety leave the stage to the care of women and boys and men too old to fight. *My* place was back in England. At present, of course, I was totally unfitted for the task that fate appeared to have in store for me, but surely I could learn to be a soldier! I had played military parts so often on the stage that I ought to be able to play one in real life for a change, and after all, many of my ancestors had been fighting men. In any case, there was no question in what direction both duty and inclination lay. Why, at the very moment that I was mechanically going through my performance on the stage, scores and scores of Englishmen would be planning just as I was, to hurry back from all parts of the world to answer the mother country's call. What is it, this deep-down love of country, this patriotism, that makes us all,

even the least likely, burn with impatience to be soldiers to defend our native land when it is menaced? What matters it if wars are made by financial profiteers and lying statesmen, if soldiers are deluded with false battle cries to fight for a country "fit for heroes to live in," only to return to it, those that are left, to die of starvation and want, forgotten by the people they went forth to save? Why is it that these strange messages for help, despatched by no human agency, unerringly reach each one of our hearts and always will do so, please God! and be correctly deciphered there, so that almost before our conscious minds are apprised of the contents, the answer is being prepared?

It is not a lust to kill that makes us into soldiers. I have read so-called war books that created the impression that in the heat of battle all men "see red;" personally I never met or heard a single authentic case of a soldier who ever "saw red" during the whole campaign. My own experience has been that soldiers themselves are hardly so blood-thirsty as the people who send them out to fight. No soldier in the war could have done half the gruesome and vindictive things that I overheard two dear old ladies in Bournemouth planning to do to the

German emperor if ever they were fortunate enough to get their hands on him. The most hair-raising story of the Great War I ever read was contained in the letter home of my company cook, written two days after we first arrived in France. I was the officer responsible for censoring the men's correspondence, and I well remember sitting enthralled in my wooden hut in Havre reading of all the wonderful adventures and narrow escapes this gallant cook of mine had already gone through. I imagine most of the blood-curdling books that appeared soon after the war were penned by individuals whose entire army careers had been passed well behind the lines, dishing out cups of tea or packets of cigarettes to wounded Tommies in Y. M. C. A. huts. A regiment of men who "saw red" directly an engagement commenced would be practically useless in modern warfare where clear heads and rigid discipline are essential to success.

But, to return to my own story, eventually I got my manager to release me from my engagement in "Peg o' My Heart" and I returned to England. I applied to the War Office for a commission, and because I had seven brothers who were already officers in the navy and the army,

they made me an officer, also. I imagine the clerk, whose duty it was to appoint second lieutenants to the new armies, was getting accustomed to making them out of Gilberts.

I was granted two weeks' leave, at the end of which period I was directed to report "forthwith" at an officers' training camp in the south of England.

I spent this fortnight in getting my uniform made, being photographed in it, and growing a moustache. My theatrical training stood me in good stead in helping me to cultivate the kind of moustache suitable for a second lieutenant. I did not make the mistake that some temporary officers made, of growing the type of moustache usually worn by a sergeant-major or a field marshal.

Surprise is sometimes expressed that actors should have turned out efficient officers. The free Bohemian life of the stage would hardly seem the best preparation for the strict discipline of army life, and yet it was this very theatrical training that caused actors to obtain rapid promotion. I think the reason for this is that actors, on obtaining a commission, took it just as they would have taken a fresh part to study. They knew the "make-up" required, they were

conversant, from practice in a score of parts, with the speech and all the little tricks that go to the composition of a typical subaltern. Then, their experience in appearing before large bodies of people and using their voices correctly gave them confidence for the ordeal of the first day on the parade ground. They were used to projecting their personalities, they commenced by acting as officers, and very shortly their parts became real.

As I have said, I had been directed by the War Office to report at Fort Purbrook, Portsmouth. It was my first acquaintance with the army term "forthwith," and I was duly impressed, so much so in fact, that I caught the earliest possible train out of London for Portsmouth—that is, of course, the first train with a dining car attached. I felt that the War Office would hardly expect me to proceed without my lunch, however anxiously they might be looking forward to my co-operation in the Great War.

As I settled myself comfortably in a corner seat, I gave a casual glance at my moustache, reflected in the carriage window. Really it had come on remarkably well these last few days. As I explained to my mother, if one looked at it sideways in a fairly strong northern light, it

appeared quite thick in places. My mother is a little short-sighted, and although she was full of praise and admiration, I felt she had not appreciated it quite as much as one with keener sight might have done.

I picked up a magazine and started to read but soon threw it down again. I found it difficult to concentrate on weak fiction at a time when world history was in the making and, it is rather a curious thing, this disinclination to read remained with me throughout the war in spite of the fact that in an ordinary way I am extremely fond of books of all kinds.

I was rapidly getting used to my uniform and Sam Browne belt, although it had only been returned from my tailor's the morning before. Indeed, half an hour after I had first tried it on I was lunching at the United Service Club in Pall Mall with my eldest brother, a commander in the Royal Navy. We sat at a small table in the long dining-room and enjoyed a very excellent spread—this was, of course, in the early days of the war, for, later, things were very different. My attention was attracted after a while by the entrance of a tall officer in uniform who proceeded to seat himself at the table next to ours. To my horror and amazement I saw

it was Lord Kitchener! The great field marshal and myself were the only army officers in the room, and *I* had only been an officer for a few minutes! What should I do? Surely I ought to do *something!* A second lieutenant could hardly continue eating salmon mayonnaise whilst the Secretary of State for War, Earl Kitchener of Khartoum, sat before an empty plate within arm's reach. I remember thinking to myself, "This is an absurd situation; here am I, the most junior officer in the whole world at the present moment, seated next to the head of the British army. I am sure I ought to stand up, offer him my salmon, or retire from the room with humble apologies for ever having dared to appear there." Thank goodness! at this moment my brother suggested a move to the smoking-room for coffee. As I walked down the stately dining hall I felt the great field marshal's eyes were upon me, boring through my back. The painted generals, and admirals, too, in their gilded frames hanging on the walls, seemed to be glaring as though to say, "Why the devil don't you do the correct thing? You are an officer, a junior officer, a *very* junior officer! Don't you know what to do in the presence of a field marshal?" A glass of port steadied my nerves some-

what, but I was not sorry when my brother suddenly remarked in the middle of an anecdote that he had to be back at the Admiralty in five minutes. We parted on the steps of the club and I returned to the Savoy Hotel half expecting a telephone message from the War Office to say that the Secretary of State for War had decided to cancel my commission.

However, all these things had taken place yesterday; to-day I was still a full-blown second lieutenant travelling on my first free army warrant. It was all rather thrilling!

Evening had arrived when the taxi I luckily secured at Portsmouth Town Station deposited me, together with an enormous pile of camp kit and private baggage, at the gates of the great red brick fortress on the Cosham Hills. Fort Purbrook was erected many years ago, one of a chain of fortresses along the southern coast of England, built to repel the threatened invasion of Great Britain by Napoleon and his army. Much water had passed under London Bridge since those days, and these same fortresses were now being employed as training centres for officers and men to fit them to take their places beside the gallant poilu in his defence of France.

I soon fixed up my collapsible bed in the long

army hut which it appeared I was to share with thirteen other officers. The numerous small articles of kit I had bought from the persuasive salesman in London because he assured me no officer should be without them, things such as patent periscopes, trench shaving tackle, cigarette lighters, compasses, map cases, daggers and flasks, caused quite an appreciable amount of amusement to the more seasoned subalterns who watched me unpack. One bright boy remarked that if I succeeded in hanging all the things I had purchased for my equipment I should look like a Christmas tree. I turned in between the blankets I had just arranged on my bed. It was the first time in my life I had ever slept without sheets and was soon blissfully unconscious of the outside world; a few moments afterwards, or so it seemed to me, I was awakened by the ear-piercing screech of a bugle blown by some man just outside my hut apparently giving his own version of "reveille."

Breakfast over, we drew rifles from the quartermaster's stores, and proceeded to the parade ground, about two hundred of us, where we were quickly fallen in by the sergeant-major, two deep in line.

General routine orders were read by the

adjutant. They consisted of a detailed list of all the things one could not do. It appeared that the only things an officer *could* do at Fort Purbrook was to remain in camp, attend all parades, and pass all examinations.

Colonel Slater, the commandant, then arrived on the parade ground. He was a smart old fellow, with a fierce white moustache, a red face and a very straight back. He was a type that was very prevalent at the commencement of the war—retired on half pay and completely forgotten by the Service in which he had once been an active member. These ex-officers came into prominence almost immediately war was declared and offered themselves for re-employment. In almost every case they were given appointments, either in command of reserve battalions or as commandants of schools and rest camps. They did good work, too, at a time when their services were urgently needed in the formation of new units. Later in the war they were referred to as "Old Dug-outs" and scrapped in order to provide easy jobs for officers with influence and a disinclination for the discomforts and danger of the trenches in France.

Colonel Slater had been living on the retired pay of a major for some years in a small villa in

Cheltenham. He volunteered for active service in Flanders, was refused on account of age, and appointed to the command of Purbrook Training School. The war rejuvenated him and he was given the rank of lieutenant-colonel. After cleaning his own boots for years, he had a whole battalion to clean them if necessary. After existing on a few shillings a week pocket money allowed him by his wife, he found himself with the full pay and allowances of a colonel. From being second in command to Mrs. Slater, he became commanding officer of about twelve hundred officers and men. The government supplied him with a motor car and he had two riding horses for his personal use.

He was a man of commanding presence and of terrifying aspect; he twirled his moustache fiercely, and cleared his throat with a growling sound. He cast his eyes along the front rank of the officers and for some unknown reason they came to rest on me! He beckoned me to approach. My heart was in my mouth as I advanced as smartly as possible. I had only been in the army a few hours, my rifle shook, and I could feel the perspiration between my palm and the butt. I flatter myself I *did* know how to salute correctly. I had had quite a lot of saluting

to do in "The Second in Command," a play produced by Cyril Maude some years ago, and then I had practised with a walking stick for a rifle in front of the looking-glass before leaving home.

At last the colonel spoke. "Look here, my boy," he said, "I want you to give these fellows some drill, just move 'em about a bit!"

I was horrified! My heart sank to my boots, a cold feeling of despair seized me. Was my career in the army, which had started so brightly, doomed to disaster on its very threshold? Whatever I did I knew would expose my utter ignorance of all military training. Should I be court-martialled and dismissed from the army in disgrace, I wondered, or just drummed out as an imposter in the ordinary way? Beads of moisture began to gather on my forehead and steal under the peak of my cap, dropping with little splashes on the gravel parade ground in front of me. In the few seconds I stood there portions of my past life passed in review before me, as before a drowning man. I remembered some lines I had spoken in a military melodrama in the old days on tour, a play called, "Slaves of Passion," in which I had played the hero. I recalled one of the scenes—it was the first act, the stage was empty; outside could be heard the

tramping of an army, the theater orchestra was playing a stirring march while the crunch! crunch! of the army became louder, the six supers and two stage hands marking time most impressively; and then had come my cue—as Captain Philip Lestrange I shouted out some orders to my men, and then, as the music swelled in triumph, I dashed on to the stage. My entrance had always gone extremely well, even with the smallest houses.

These words of command, spoken so long ago, came back to me in my hour of need. It was worth trying, anything was better than standing tongue tied as I was doing now.

I drew a deep breath, I gazed at where the officers stood, their faces blurred and far away, and with all my voice I shouted: "Troops quick march, shoulder arms, right about turn, dis-MISS!"

* * * * * * *

After a certain amount of confusion the sergeants succeeded in getting the officers together again and then the colonel spoke to me. I had shot my bolt, I experienced a feeling of relief, his voice no longer had the power to frighten me.

"You appear to have plenty of voice," he said, "but I don't quite understand your words of com-

mand. 'Shoulder arms' is only used in rifle regiments, and '*right* about turn' was abolished when you were still a child—how do you explain it?"

"Well, sir," I replied in a very small voice, "you see, I am an actor; on the stage we always say 'shoulder arms,' and 'right about turn' is considered quite the correct thing by the best *stage* directors."

"An actor, are you?" queried the colonel. "That's most interesting. You must come to tea and meet my wife. She will be delighted to make your acquaintance. As a matter of fact she has just written a play!"

"Thank you, sir," I replied and I returned to my place in the ranks; evidently my late profession was going to be more of a help than a hindrance to my career in the army.

Two days later I called at Colonel Slater's house in Southsea. Mrs. Slater, a lady of ample proportions, received me very graciously. She wanted to read me her play before tea, but I persuaded her to read it to me afterwards. Tea was over very quickly, but the play took rather a long time. After careful consideration, I told her that in my opinion she had written a tragedy that was remarkable and unusual; having fifty

speaking parts might add to the expense of production, and the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in the last act would certainly take a certain amount of staging, but provided a manager of sufficient wealth and understanding could be found—and there were such—there was no doubt in my mind that the whole thing would be a brilliant success.

Two weeks later I was the proud possessor of a certificate signed by the colonel himself stating "Second Lieutenant V. Gilbert is capable of commanding a platoon in the field."

CHAPTER II.

France.

I stood knee deep in the bracken on Cosham Hills the day I received my certificate from the colonel and looked out over the turquoise blue waters of the Solent towards the "Isle of Wight." To me it was an island of happy memories. I had spent many wonderful holidays there as a boy when I was at the Royal Naval Academy in Southsea.

In the stillness and drowsy peace of the summer afternoon I fancied I could hear the faint rumbling of the mighty guns in France. Did I really hear them, or was it the blood from my heart pounding away inside?

It was about this time that many people, when they were alone, and especially in the silences of the night, fancied they heard the guns; but those that did so, I noticed, invariably had relatives they were anxious about or men they loved, fighting for them "out there."

I registered a vow that I would yet prove worthy of the honour Colonel Slater had bestowed upon me, and which I could not help

feeling I had obtained more by diplomacy and a certain knowledge of the fair sex than by sheer military efficiency.

The days passed very quickly at Fort Purbrook. Civilians had to be made into soldiers in less than six weeks, and it was difficult to realise, when the officers' training course at length broke up, that I had been there over a month. We were despatched to join regiments throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles. My unit, the 7th Battalion of the Dorsets, was stationed at Bovington, just outside Bournemouth, so I had not far to go.

I was sorry to say good-bye to the friends I had made in Portsmouth. There is always a peculiar sadness about the ending of an association of any kind. I think comradeship was one of the finest lessons taught by the Great War, and one of the things that demobilised officers and men felt the loss of very keenly when the new armies were finally disbanded. It was the amalgamation of men of all classes in a common cause, sharing the same dangers, taking part in the same pleasures. It brought about a levelling up and a wearing away of the rough corners. It gave to those not previously brought so intimately in contact with their fellow-men, a wider understanding and a

deeper comprehension that ought to be of invaluable help in settling the disputes and the misunderstandings bound to arise from time to time between different classes of the community.

The camp of the reserve brigade, to which I now reported for duty, was on the Dorsetshire Downs. Quaint winding country lanes ran down to the sea at Lulworth Cove. Week-end leave to Bournemouth, the nearest large town, was fairly easy to obtain. The station for the brigade, however, was at Wool, some four miles distant. Ramshackle old dog carts, almost falling to pieces, dragged by aged horses whose harness mainly consisted of knotted pieces of string, conveyed the officers to and from Wool Station. The entire cost of these "turn-outs" was more than repaid each week in fares netted by the patriotic villagers, happy in the consciousness of "doing their bit," and incidentally doing everyone else as well.

Great excitement in the camp was caused one day on news being received that the 7th Reserve Battalion would be inspected by a general from headquarters, but everything passed off satisfactorily. The general turned out to be a delightful old gentleman of about sixty-five years of age, who observed, on seeing a range-taking class at

work registering distances with a one man range-finder, "Ah, so that's the Lewis gun we've heard so much about, is it?"

After that it was impossible to take him really seriously. He had an excellent tea in the officers' mess, and everyone had grown quite fond of him by the time he departed in a government Rolls-Royce motorcar for Weymouth to carry out further inspections.

After four months at Bovington camp I applied for a transfer to the machine gun corps then being formed in the Midlands. I was very anxious to get out to France. Machine gunners were urgently needed, and this seemed the best way of achieving my object. Machine gun officers were to have horses, too, which was an added inducement. The application was favourably considered, and in November I departed for Grantham.

The machine gun training centre, in spite of its imposing title, consisted at this time of a large number of tumble-down huts, with broken windows, no arrangements for heating and was half buried in a sea of mud. Thousands of officers and men had been dumped there with very little preparation for their comfort, or even for the supply of the necessities of existence.

I was delighted, however, to find that a friend of mine from Portsmouth, who had also applied for a transfer from his regiment in the north, was to be in the same machine gun company as myself. Captain Oxenham, the officer in command, had already seen active service in the disastrous affair at Loos.

The first parade of the company was also my first experience of close contact with the "rank and file," all my service up to this time having been spent in officers' classes.

Captain Oxenham gave me command of a Section, which consisted of thirty-two non-commissioned officers and men, and four machine guns.

The sub-section sergeant called the men to attention as I advanced to carry out my inspection. I wondered if they would notice how nervous I was. I knew the correct detail for an inspection, of course, as laid down in the military text books, but practice is very different from theory, as one rapidly finds out in the army. I was painfully aware that my face was flushed, and my walk somewhat lacking in that easy confidence I felt was required for the task before me.

I strolled round the ranks in approved fashion,

however, closely followed by Sergeant Parsons, looking carefully at each man. It was rather wonderful to feel that all these fellows standing so rigidly to attention had been placed in my charge. For weal or woe they were *my* men, I was their commanding officer, their master! Any orders I might give they would have to obey. I noticed the throbbing of a pulse in one boy's throat, poor chap, perhaps he was nervous, too. Another had the bluest eyes I had ever seen in a man; some looked rather tough characters, and there was one youngster who had a perpetual smile playing round the corners of his mouth. I felt that it was hardly the correct thing to have a smile, even a small one, when one was being inspected by an officer, but I did not say anything.

The ordeal over, I gave the necessary orders to move off—another thrill as they marched away to my word of command—my men! my section! It was really rather splendid!

In those few moments taken up as the little column disappeared across the parade ground, I experienced, as I leisurely followed in its wake, the fascination and pride of command. It is something all officers eventually learn.

I never forgot that day with my section; it was my first real taste of power.

As the days passed I began to know my men individually. On Friday there was a kit inspection: all the men's clothes and belongings were laid out in neat rows beside their huts, even to toothbrushes and cakes of soap. Now and then I would tell a man to hand me a shirt, an undervest, or an odd boot or so, to see if they needed exchanging or repair; it seemed to bring us on intimate terms at once. Nothing was hidden from me. In their kit bags were their keepsakes from home, little bundles of letters, photographs and mascots, and these were placed separately from the clothing and equipment, but an officer had the right to see everything.

It struck me that a second lieutenant is rather like the combination of father and mother to a large family. It is a position of big responsibility, but tremendously fascinating, too. British Tommies are very like children anyhow, irresponsible, easily pleased, easily discouraged, very sensitive to ridicule, very quick to repay kindness and understanding with devotion and, underneath it all, extremely simple and likeable.

Soon the men of the section got in the way of coming to me with all their troubles, confident in my wisdom, believing my advice would be invaluable in elucidating the little problems they set me to solve.

In those early days one of the proudest moments I experienced was when my section sergeant, James Parsons, a great big fellow of about thirty years of age, who knew his drill, I must confess, a great deal better than I did, and of whom I was secretly rather in awe, feeling that the sergeant must see through my inexperience in military matters, came to me and, after asking permission to speak, said:

"I've had a little trouble with my wife, sir. It's with reference to 'er mother, a mischief-maker if ever there was one. I've got a letter here from the missus, sir, that I'd like to have your advice on before I write back. I don't want to act hasty like."

Until this moment Sergeant Parsons and myself had seemed rather far apart, but then the sergeant's suggestions, although invariably given in a respectful and correct manner, had very often seemed to infer a lack of military knowledge in his officer. For instance, on one occasion I had chosen a piece of ground from which to give illustrations of "Fire Orders," and Parsons came up, saluted smartly, and said, "Excuse me, sir, but the hill to the right has a very good field of view if you would care to see it," implying, as I felt, that the place I had care-

fully picked out had *not* a good field of view and was in fact perfectly useless for the purpose for which I had selected it. This feeling was accentuated after an inspection of the sergeant's choice which was undoubtedly superior to my own, and from which position the "Fire Orders" were given by me in the end.

But now the sergeant had capitulated and, by asking my advice on a delicate matter, had acknowledged my superiority, a point until then somewhat in doubt.

I read Mrs. Parsons' letter. I considered the matter carefully from all possible angles; it would not do to give any hurried decision on such an important matter. I flatter myself my advice was sound, but in any case Sergeant Parsons was very grateful and apparently decided then and there to do as I suggested.

After this little incident I felt that at last the section was really and truly mine. It was very nice, too, on meeting the sergeant in a morning to say:

"Hello! Sergeant Parsons. Have you heard from your wife lately? How is Mrs. Mudge behaving?"

It gave us a common interest on which to meet, and from that moment Parsons became the will-

ing and admiring second-in-command of what I honestly believe was the best and most efficient section in Grantham.

A machine gun company is one of the smallest independent commands in the army. Officers and men are thrown together more than in any other branch of the service. The "esprit de corps" and friendly rivalry of sections all make for efficiency, and the individual initiative of each man in a gun team is developed to a surprising degree.

I threw my whole heart and soul into my work. Soldiering is a fascinating occupation in war time, and if I was somewhat of a dreamer still, I was also fully conscious that knowledge and plenty of hard work are necessary before most dreams come true. As a small boy I had been tremendously romantic, and although romance is difficult when you have a large head and a healthy appetite, as I have always had, still it was the romance and adventure of the stage that attracted me to become an actor. How was I to know what ordinary and respectable citizens actors usually are?

It was the romance of the war that was driving me on to become efficient enough to be sent "overseas." I *wanted* to deceive myself, I

wanted to believe that we were all knights dedicating our lives to a great cause, training ourselves to aid France, to free Belgium, to crush Prussianism, and make the whole world a better place to live in. What did it matter if we wore drab khaki instead of suits of glittering armour? The spirit of the Crusaders was in all these men of mine who worked so cheerfully to prepare for the great adventure! And even if they wore ugly little peak caps instead of helmets with waving plumes, was not their courage just as great, their idealism just as fine, as that of the knights of old who had set out with such dauntless faith under the leadership of Richard the Lion Hearted to free the Holy Land?

Just when we had given up all hopes of ever getting out to the front the orders for France came. I was promoted to second-in-command of the 180th Machine Gun Company and had to hand over my section to Lieutenant Lamb. As I turned away towards the orderly room after the little ceremony had taken place, Sergeant Parsons called for "Three cheers for Lieutenant Gilbert!" The men responded with a will, their voices echoing across the parade ground. It was the sweetest music I had ever heard, better than the favourable applause on the first night of a

new play. I felt a lump rise in my throat. It was worth months and months of work to earn the affection of such splendid fellows.

The few days that remained to us before entraining for Southampton, en route to France, passed rapidly, and one evening the company, complete in every detail, with mules and wagons, cook's cart and water cart, marched away down the country lanes to the station. It was summer again and the night air brought out the smell of the hedges and the cut grass and clover lying in the fields.

As second-in-command I rode in rear of the company. The men sang as they marched along, "It's a long way to Tipperary." If they could have seen into the future then, what would have been their song I wonder? The shell-strewn roads of France, the mountain paths of Macedonia, the burning sands of Egypt, the plains of Philistia, the rocky hills outside the city of Jerusalem, and the Valley of the Jordan, thirteen hundred feet below the level of the sea! In all these places many of us were fated to march in the years to come.

I confess I did not feel like singing myself. I could not help thinking: "How many of these boys, so full of life and the joy of living, will ever

return safely to England? How many will be disfigured and broken in health, and how many wooden crosses in distant lands will mark the graves of others?"

But now their song had changed. They were singing, "As your hair grows whiter I will love you more." Voices became hushed; many were thinking of their mothers, others of their wives and sweethearts; I was thinking of my own mother in the dear old manor house at home, her hair was already almost white, and I could never love her more than I did now. Poor little mother! and poor mothers of all those boys of mine on the threshold of the Great Adventure!—the years to come would be full of anxiety and sorrow for them. It is the ones that are left behind who suffer, not those who go out to fight.

On board the train at last, tearing through sleeping England. Some of the men were singing still, but their voices had become drowsy and only fragments of song were heard. The mules and horses were kicking away in their boxes, the engine now and then letting off a wailing shriek like some poor wounded creature.

I was feeling just a little disillusioned; it was the natural reaction after all the excitement and preparations for the move. And then this travel-

ling at night—always at night, as though one were ashamed of light!

Southampton at dawn. The company looked tired and jaded. Animals had to be watered, rations to be drawn, nominal rolls prepared, embarkation staff officers to be interviewed—awkward fellows these and difficult to satisfy.

And so the day slipped by; then night again, and the crowded troop ship steals across the channel, silently, darkly, mysteriously.

Havre at last. *France!* Again the thrill of the Great Adventure came back to everyone. Troops crowded the deck, peering at the silent wharfs slowly becoming distinct in the raw morning light. A slow drizzle descended; the piers looked damp and desolate.

"Ah, see, there's a Tommy over there standing on that pontoon."

Immediately hundreds of voices shout in chorus:

"Are we down'earted? No-o-o-o!"

"But you damn soon will be!" shouted back the khaki watcher on the shore.

And that was our welcome to France!

The disembarkation of troops is always a slow process, hindered by the absence of the staff officer in charge who is invariably having a meal

when a ship docks. He eventually turns up in a very bad temper and immediately asks for all sorts of impossible things, such as unbelievable quantities of nominal rolls, the religious persuasion of all troops on board, *etc.*, *etc.* Satisfied at last with these, he then stumps the O. C. troops by asking if all men are inoculated, and if so, how many times? Should an answer be forthcoming he then quietly inquires what is the exact weight of all baggage and stores?

The hours drag on, but finally we are all deposited on the quay and the officers and men given a hot meal. One soon finds out the value of a hot meal on active service; if stew is not possible, tea makes quite a good substitute—but something hot it must be. A tired soldier will forgive almost everything but a cold meal.

You learn things very rapidly in the army; for instance, a rest camp is about the last place in the world where you can get a rest. Parades and inspections, and change of quarters take place all the time, and officers and men are worried and harassed from pillar to post by petty restrictions and red tape. An "off" day is usually taken up with inoculations.

We spent three days in Havre rest camp, and were all extremely glad to be on the move again for "somewhere in France."

The night before departure, members of my company were invited to the camp theatre, where a performance was being given by one of those companies organised by public-spirited managers, made up of actors and actresses "doing their bit" and having a good time behind the firing line. But it appeared to be more or less a private affair for the local staff, and the intrusion of the machine gun officers in the good seats was resented by the commandant of the camp and his friends, so we did not particularly enjoy ourselves. As a friend of mine, who was standing with me at the back of the tent, whispered just before the curtain went up, "the only keenness for the front these Staff Johnnies seem to have is for the front row of the stalls."

As our troop train crawled through France, the men threw their tins of bully beef and biscuits to little bands of child bandits, stationed at different strategic positions along the track, calling out with monotonous but shrill childish insistence, "Tommy give bully beef—biscuits?" It was thus that a large quantity of corned beef and pounds of army biscuit went astray, and many soldiers that night retired supperless to bed.

At last our train arrived at rail head; guns

could be heard thundering in the distance, planes were humming overhead. The 60th (London) Division, to which we were attached as the 180th Machine Gun Company, was concentrating at Acq, a small village behind the lines at Vimy Ridge.

I rode on in advance of the company to arrange the billets and practice some of my French on the friendly natives.

For a whole week we remained "at rest," during which time all officers and section sergeants visited the trenches for instruction in trench routine.

Who has not experienced or read of the trenches in France? The mud, the flies and the stench, and death forever waiting round the next traverse! And, worst of all, the dreary monotony of inaction, the crushing out of individualism and the fatalistic anticipation of conflict! I had come out from England prepared to fight, eager to do my share, but somehow this did not seem like real fighting; never to see one's opponent; to stand for hours with liquid mud up to one's thighs—for the heavy shelling brought constant rain; to fire machine guns at unseen targets for pre-arranged periods throughout the night on elevations worked out with map, com-

pass and clinometer; and then if one *did* have any time to oneself, to spend it like a rat in a deep, damp dugout. It was so unlike all my preconceived notions of warfare. I could understand at last why it was that officers returning from the front to the machine gun training center at Grantham had had so little to say. There was so little one could say: it was all unutterably beastly—it wasn't fighting, it wasn't fair play, it was just slaughter!

A few days after we had taken up our positions, the enemy sent over poisoned gas. We all expected an attack, too, but it did not materialise. It was probably the Hun's experiment with a new formula.

I was at company headquarters in Neuville St. Vaast when some of the gassed men were brought in. A few had been in my old section; they were very badly gassed, and two died. The others lived, but I think had I been in their places, I would have wished to die, too. The effect of this particular kind of gas was suffocation and a gradual growth of ulcers in the lungs. I visited the injured men in the hospital before they left for home. One of them, Private Bennet, had had an excellent baritone voice. It was he who led the singing on the march from the

camp at Grantham—he would never sing again.

For six months we remained in the line. We had rather a bad time and our casualties were heavy, but our losses were quickly made good by reinforcements from England; and then, in November, orders came for us to march south to Abbeville for intensive training before the division was thrown into the Somme maelstrom. I wrote a long letter home telling my mother I was well behind the firing line and perfectly safe—and I made my will! I got a fellow officer and the company sergeant-major to witness it. Sergeant-Major Borer was an old soldier who had obviously not had much experience with wills. He informed me that in his opinion he ought to read my last testament before affixing his signature to it. I assured him that it was not necessary, and he replied rather stiffly: "Well, sir, as an officer I'll take your word for it, but I *have* known of cases of men being charged for small kit they hadn't had, all on account of putting their names to papers they hadn't read."

One thing I learned to appreciate in the army was the English soldier's sense of humour, and particularly that of the cockney Tommy. I have often had friendly arguments in America with Americans who insisted that the English pos-

sessed no sense of humour whatever. Why, I have seen English soldiers die with jests on their lips and brave smiles on their faces—they were such a cheery crowd, those London boys!

There was one little incident that occurred during an advance. We were creeping forward from one shell hole to another through liquid fields of mud. The enemy had put down a barrage which was rapidly thinning us out. As we crawled forward we met the remnants of a battalion that had just been relieved by fresh troops. The poor fellows had been badly cut up. Suddenly one of my men called out in shrill cockney dialect, "I say, boys! you 'aven't seen a girl on a bicycle round 'ere, 'ave you?" Faces lit up at once all along the line and, I am sure, that one touch of humour gave us renewed courage to push on to our objective.

Then there is a story told of an English officer who was mortally wounded in the Loos affair. His shattered body was gently placed on a stretcher. The bearers slowly and carefully raised it to their shoulders and were about to move off when the officer looked over the side, and with a twisted smile said, "Home, James!" Before they reached the dressing station he had gone.

Shall we ever forget Bairnsfather's "Ole Bill" and "Bert" and "Alf," whose cheery faces have looked down from the walls of a thousand "dug-outs"?

Certainly our English sense of humour came out more during the war than at any other time in our history; perhaps it was because it was then that we needed it most!

The day we arrived in the Abbeville district my soldier servant went sick and was evacuated to "Blighty." I asked the section officers to send me suitable applicants from each gun team from which to make a selection. They evidently thought it a good opportunity to get rid of any undesirable men they had, for it was a sorry collection of humanity that presented itself before me at company headquarters. I was about to send them all back as hopeless, when I glanced again at a little man standing at the end of the line. Private Henry Sale's head just about came up to the shoulders of the man next to him; his face was sallow and he had a natural stoop; he had bandy legs and flat feet. His uniform was too big for his slight frame and he did not appear very strong, and yet there was *something* about the man that appealed to me—what it was, I could not define. Perhaps it was because his eyes

were so bright and eager and that he was making such tremendous efforts to stand smartly at attention and look like a real soldier, and failing so lamentably. I asked him if he was a married man; he told me he was. I realised he was totally unfitted for the trenches and decided I would give him a trial: from that moment he became my "batman."

Sale was typical in many ways of the citizen soldier. Nature had intended him for a man of peace, fate had pitchforked him into the war. When I got to know him better he told me something of his life, of the little butcher's shop in the Lancashire town, of the struggle he and Mrs. Sale had had to keep it open even before the war came; and then when England threw in her lot with France and Belgium, the lengthy family discussions as to whether he should join up or not. He was over thirty-eight and had bandy legs and bad feet, and if he went the little business they had spent their lives in creating would probably be swept away. But England wanted men pretty badly at that time; how could he stay at home? Sometimes he gave me letters from his wife to read—such badly spelt, illiterate letters they were, you would have laughed at them had you not felt the bravery and the longing for "her

man" that lay hidden between the lines. Mrs. Sale was proud of him, although she did not tell him so; she was satisfied that he should go. It made me proud to think there were so many English wives like that; for are not we men what our women make us?

Final arrangements had been made for the 60th Division to move up into the Somme battle area when hurried orders came for us to embark at Marseilles forthwith for Salonika. Trouble was brewing in the Near East. Greece had threatened to throw in her lot with the Central Powers. This meant danger to the small Allied army in the Macedonian hills. It was as though a prayer of old was being repeated: "Come over into Macedonia, and help us!"

We were to act as a mobile force capable of facing whichever way danger might come, either from the Turks or Bulgars, or from the treachery of the King of Greece. As our convoy of troopships swept out of Marseilles harbour into the sunlit waters of the Mediterranean, I watched the coast of France recede like the memory of a bad dream. The Goddess of Chance had taken a hand in the game of my life; we were heading for the East. I was on my way to those countries where romance and adventure could still be found.

CHAPTER III.

The Balkans.

The ancient and historical city of Salonika is built on the side of a hill overlooking a busy harbour crowded with small craft. Enclosed in a fine medieval stone wall, it is picturesque and very quaint in appearance. It is at its best, however, when viewed some distance from the shore from the deck of an incoming vessel. The place swarms with people of almost every nationality under the sun. Sickness and crime rub shoulders in the teeming thoroughfares: degradation and want and misery lurk in the evil-smelling back streets. The modern part of Salonika is about on a par, as regards cleanliness and sanitation, with the slum area of any large European city.

When the London division marched through the town to the camping ground some distance outside, we passed soldiers of every Allied country: French, Russian, Italian, Serbian, Greek and British troops mingled with the cut-throat bandits of Macedonia to whom the war had brought a thriving trade. Our arrival had

been prepared for, and we spent little over a week re-fitting for mountain warfare. We drew large quantities of pack mules to replace our wheel transport that had proved so useful in France, but which would have been more of a hindrance than a help in the narrow defiles and rocky passes of the Balkan hills. As soon as each brigade had completed its equipment it moved off.

Then commenced for the 180th Brigade a long trek which was eventually to bring us to what was then known as the Lake Doiran front. With mules unused to harness of any kind and many of the transport men at this time unacquainted with the peculiar sense of humour this hardy animal possesses, marching in those early days was very trying.

I have frequently seen one mule halt a whole column whilst he danced about first on his front, then on his hind legs, not satisfied until he had succeeded in depositing his load in the center of the road or in raising that laugh to which he considered his performance was entitled.

I rode on in advance with the brigade staff captain. It was our job to parcel out the various camping areas so that everything was in readiness when the tired men and animals arrived

in the dusk of evening; search parties would be sent out to bring in any mules that had cast their packs by the wayside or decamped into the hills.

On the march we rode through bleak, desolate country that in happier days had produced some of the world's finest tobacco crops. The valleys were now barren and deserted. Villages, many of them falling into decay, the houses having been burnt to the ground in the recent Balkan wars, were invariably warned of our approach by wild mongrel dogs who rushed out at us, barking fiercely and showing their teeth.

Sheltered by hovels clustering together, for one could hardly describe the filthy ruins as houses, were people so starved, diseased and miserably clad as scarcely to appear human. Under cover of the night these poor wretches would creep up to our camp, nose out the deep filled-in refuse pits, and with their hands or bits of old iron, dig up the offal buried there; and then, too famished to wait until they got back, squat down in the darkness and gnaw at the bones and bacon rind they had succeeded in excavating. At last, gorged with this fearsome meal, they would take away an armful of empty meat and milk cans, so that, in the seclusion of

their homes, they might with their tongues and fingers extract any substance that still clung to the insides of the tins.

We spent five months in Macedonia and in that time covered many, many weary miles. France had made us realise the grimness of war, but it was the Balkans that taught us to be soldiers. We marched over terrible roads in all weather, we scrambled up precipitous mountain tracks dragging our pack mules with us. Each evening, worn out with fatigue, we pitched a fresh camp; dawn found it struck and loaded up with the head of the column winding out into the open country. The transport personnel had such constant practice they could saddle and load in the dark. There is no doubt, however, that in spite of the hard work, or perhaps because of it, our physique and general health improved all this time. I was interested in noticing the change in my own men. They were getting hardier, more self-reliant, cleaner cut, in fact, they were growing used to privation.

The quality and quantity of the food we now received was very different to the affluent rations we had enjoyed in France. The worst privation was the shortage of cigarettes.

Under all these conditions the men remained

cheerful and willing, they never complained and were always ready to see the humorous side of things.

One particularly trying march took place on Boxing Day, the day after Christmas. This holiday is celebrated in almost every town in England by the production of the annual pantomime, usually an old-fashioned fairy story set to music. The day was hot and we had all fallen out by the side of the road for ten minutes' halt; the men's packs were off and they lay about in all positions getting what rest they could before the march was resumed. Suddenly round a bend in the road came a quaint string of Balkan villagers.

First came the men of the party, mounted on tiny donkeys and dressed in the most wonderful eastern colours, smoking long twisted cigars and waving fly whisks before their faces.

Next came women and girls, on foot, carrying huge baskets and earthenware pots on their heads. Some of the women had, in addition, babies tied to their backs. Following the women came more men and youths on donkeys. Children, with the serious faces of "grown-ups" and a complete disregard for the hundreds of soldiers looking on, toddled along beside the

donkeys or clung to the women's skirts. Two wild-looking mountain dogs and half a dozen old women in black, carrying bundles of firewood, completed the procession. One of the "Tommies," after gazing earnestly at these people for some time, turned to his pals and shouted, "Ooray, boys! We shan't be done out of our pantermine after all. 'Ere's Ali Baba an' 'is forty bloomin' fieves!"

On another occasion an undersized cockney soldier went up to one of the venerable Greek priests in Salonika, a man over six feet in height, with a long white beard, a black robe stretching to his feet and wearing the tall scuttle-shaped hat that is the hall-mark of the priests of the Orthodox Church, and looking up into his face, exclaimed, "I say, Claude, you 'aven't 'arf got a saucy lid on!" The priest, who did not understand English, just lifted up his hand and blessed him and passed on.

When we eventually found ourselves on the Doiran front we realised campaigning in the Balkans was going to be totally different to the trench warfare of France, and a great deal more enjoyable.

We had successfully got through the rainy season, trekking from one place to another, and

the spring was well advanced when we took over the outposts of a division that had been in that part of the line ever since the disastrous retreat through Serbia.

The Bulgarian defences were on a chain of mountains that formed a boundary between Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia.

In all the battles that have been fought in the past in this cockpit of Europe, these natural fortresses have never been assaulted with success. The country that was fortunate enough to hold the highest mountain ridge dominated the situation. It was not until towards the end of the war that British and French troops, assisted by remnants of the gallant Serbian army, succeeded in penetrating into the heart of Bulgaria. But this was long after my division had sailed from Salonika.

When we took over, our advance posts were in the valley, our main defence line withdrawn back into the hills but completely overlooked by the enemy, who had taken up his position in the highest ridge of the mountains.

"No Man's Land" was intersected by picturesque mountain streams that became rushing torrents during the bad weather. Lake Doiran lay glistening in the plain between the opposing

armies separated from each other by seven miles of flat country. Spring brought out numerous wild flowers of every kind to carpet the slopes of the mountains, the crests of which were often hidden in the clouds. Partridge and hare abounded, and excellent coarse fishing could be had in the lake in "No Man's Land."

Unfortunately Bulgar mounted patrols set out from the enemy's lines each evening just when the fish were biting most freely, and this interfered somewhat with our enjoyment. This disadvantage was overcome to a certain extent by taking out with us two or three scouts armed with rifles and mounted on fast horses. These men would remain some distance from the fishing party with orders to fire their rifles into the air when they spotted the Bulgars approaching, and gallop back themselves to the nearest outpost. These shots were the signal that our sport was over for the night, but I must say it was very annoying after one had been fishing for an hour without success, and then, just when one got a bite, to hear these danger signals ring out. It was rather tempting to continue for a bit with the chance of landing a fish, even if it meant leaving no time in which to dismantle the rod, and having to mount, holding the rod like a

lance, with the tackle and bait flying in the wind, and race hell for leather, followed home by the spiteful ping of Bulgar bullets.

I used to think fly fishing far more exciting than coarse fishing. I now consider bottom fishing, if indulged in under certain conditions, one of the most thrilling sports there is.

Those early days in the line were great fun. Our chief enemies were malaria and the German bombing squadron that had a peculiar fondness for our rear areas, most of the casualties occurring in the transport lines. The weather was delightful, rations were improving and, altogether, we decided our luck was in. Patrol work in the valley and raids on the enemy's position were stimulating and interesting interludes in a somewhat uneventful existence.

But, just as the giant buzzard, scavenger of the East, hovered over our camp by day seemingly almost stationary in the air at times but darting down with startling suddenness when some tempting piece of garbage met his view, so—although we knew it not, trouble was hovering over us all this time, ready to swoop and take its toll.

We had been holding the line for three months when orders were issued for a general advance.

Questions had been asked in Parliament in England with reference to the army in Salonika: "What were they doing to justify the enormous expense of maintaining a force in Macedonia?" —"Was the Secretary of State for War aware that no ground had been gained for some considerable time?"—"Unless the commander-in-chief could send more satisfactory news would steps be taken to have him replaced?"

People without the slightest idea of conditions on the Balkan front began to press for results. Articles appeared in the papers. "Irate Parent" wrote from Sydenham, saying that he had had a son killed in France, but so far as he was aware, no one was being killed in Salonika and he did not think it was right. A music hall artist sang a song in which she implored the audience "to send her to Macedonia to escape the war."

The War Office was moved at last to action, and orders were sent out to the commander-in-chief to attack.

One wonders if the middle-aged member of Parliament, probably the head of a family, who had very possibly never left the sheltered seclusion of his suburban London home, quite realised that his patriotic questions—received with

cheers in the House of Commons—were directly responsible for the loss of so many gallant lives in the spring of 1917. The generals who ordered the advance must take some of the blame, too; but was not the first Somme offensive, with its enormous casualties, the result of just such a wish to gain ground? so that the people of England might say, on reading their papers with their breakfasts, "Splendid. We are getting on remarkably well; another village taken. We must move the flags on the map."

All those of us who were in Salonika in the early summer of 1917 knew how costly would be any success achieved without sufficient troops to follow it up. But the orders went forth and, on zero day, supported by inadequate artillery, badly supplied with shells, with antiquated aeroplanes and troops full of malaria, we scrambled down the rocky sides of the hills, advanced across the plain, waist deep through the streams, and commenced to scale those almost impregnable mountain fortresses where, well dug in and out of sight, the Bulgars waited.

With all the gallantry and dash in the world, what chances of success were ours?—mowed down by machine guns, picked off by snipers and bombed from the trenches that we fought so hard

to take. Even the rocks that the Bulgars threw, coming from so great a height, caused numberless casualties.

Some of the mountain streams had been filled with concealed barbed wire, and many unfortunates were caught and held there wounded until they died of exhaustion or were mercifully put out of their misery by snipers.

We captured some ground that was completely dominated by enemy trenches, held it for a few days at terrible cost, and then relinquished it again, just as we knew we should be forced to do when first we took it.

The desired object, however, had been obtained, and the papers got the news they had been clamouring for:

> "Big advance in Macedonia. The British attack all along the line and penetrate into the enemy's trenches. It is feared the casualties are heavy."

What of that member of Parliament whose questions started all the useless slaughter—was he satisfied, I wonder? It is to be hoped so. He was lucky not to see the maimed men brought back—those that *could* be brought back, or look through powerful field glasses, as I did, at other poor fellows badly wounded, hanging on the

wires and now and then, God help them! weakly struggling to get free. He did not hear the eerie baying of the jackals who had scented their prey and were waiting for the dusk; or breathe a prayer, as many of us did, that the poor boys entangled in the stream might be dead when those wild creatures found them; or thank God for the darkness that fell over the battlefield; blotting out the terrible sight from those of us whose duty it was to watch from the hills.

I have often wondered why we pity unsuccessful generals and load them with honours; I think we ought to show them no more consideration than is shown to inefficient junior officers—far less, in fact. When a second lieutenant fails in his duty it seldom means the loss of more than a few lives—when a commander-in-chief fails it means the death of thousands!

Perhaps the reason I felt so strongly in the matter was that I lost a brother in that disastrous landing at Gallipoli, whilst another was badly wounded there and crippled for life. My youngest brother was killed during our useless advance in Macedonia, at an age when most boys are still at boarding school.

One morning I was lying in my camp bed at Corsica. My brigade (the 180th) had been

drawn out of the line for a rest before proceeding to the Struma Valley to relieve a division decimated by malaria, rife all along the banks of that pestilential stream. I had had a letter the night before from my mother to say that another of my brothers had gone. He had been pilot of a scout machine, and his squadron leader reported he had been shot down in flames and had been seen to fall in the German trenches. I was turning things over in my mind: How beastly and useless the whole war was! I had the same feeling about Macedonia that I had with regard to France; it was all so futile, so little worth while. Men were dying by the thousands, but it never seemed to lead anywhere. All the fighting invariably ended in "stalemate."

Gradually my little company was changing. The losses were made up by reinforcements from England but I missed the old faces and resented the new men, who somehow never appeared quite so good as those whose places they took. I was changing myself, too, I knew. I had been so tremendously keen in those early days: war had seemed a wonderful thing then, ennobling, uplifting! Were all the books I had read of past wars untrue, lies strung together to deceive the credulous? Surely it could not be! The spirit

that was in those early Crusaders was just as much alive today as it was centuries ago. It was only that we had a different way of doing things. The men were just as fine as they had ever been; it was a great leader we lacked; or was it that there seemed no definite goal before us, no great prize to fight for?

The newspapers spoke of a slow, but steady, wearing down of the enemies' resistance. A war of exhaustion of man-power and material. Only hang on, they said, for sufficient time and economic conditions will force the Central Powers to ask for an armistice!

But was this war at all? Not to my way of thinking, at any rate. I had no desire to be one of an army of "wearers down" of "economic exhausters!" And yet that apparently was what I was doomed to be.

The flap of my tent was carefully raised and the pale face of my servant looked in. Sale was an extraordinary fellow; no matter how hot it was he never became sunburnt.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but the commanding officer would like to see you directly you are up. Shall I bring your shaving water?"

"Right-o!" I replied with a sigh, and commenced to get up.

Sale had already prepared my bath outside the tent, and it did not take me long to shave and dress. On my way to the orderly room I passed the officers' cook house with its unpleasant odour of grease and paraffin oil: I wondered what the skipper could have to say to me, and before breakfast, too.

I found Major Oxenham seated at his desk, which consisted of two packing cases nailed together and covered with an empty sand-bag. He had some papers before him; evidently the despatch rider from brigade had arrived.

"Hello, Gilbert," said the major, "sit down. I've had rather important news. General Allenby has just been appointed to command the Egyptian expeditionary force; he contemplates an offensive on a large scale in Palestine, possibly the capture of Jerusalem. What concerns us, however, is this: Allenby has asked personally for the London division. We shall pack up and trek down to Salonika, hand in equipment and probably sail for Egypt within the next three weeks."

I listened carefully to the details for striking camp, points for the march, orders for the relief of the sections in the line by the neighbouring division, etc., etc., but, as I strode towards the

mess, the one thing that stood out in all the information I had received that morning, was a phrase of the major's—"*Possibly the capture of Jerusalem.*" It sent a thrill through my inmost being! We were to form part of Allenby's army destined to capture Jerusalem and drive the Turk from Palestine.

What ghostly figures of dead and gone Crusaders should we not meet out there to encourage and guide us to our goal?

Later, as I passed through the camp, I could see by the bustle and suppressed excitement that the good news had already leaked out. Soldiers always welcome a change of any kind, and the proposed move was thoroughly popular.

From the transport lines came the clang of hammers upon iron—horse and mule shoes were being fashioned for the march; but to me it sounded like the noise of riveting armour.

CHAPTER IV.

The Desert of Sinai.

It was June when we arrived in Egypt. Our convoy of troopships, escorted by destroyers and met some miles out at sea by battle planes from Cairo, steamed into the port of Alexandria without encountering a single enemy submarine; notwithstanding that warnings of their increased activity in the Mediterranean had been received by the division before we left Salonika.

Twenty-four hours after arrival we were all entrained and on our way up the line to Ismalia, called by the Arabs "the emerald of the Desert" and well deserving of the name. Its delightful coolness is accentuated by the numerous palm and olive trees that grow so luxuriantly there, whilst the sun-baked sand, which almost completely encircles the town, gives it the appearance of an oasis. As a matter of fact, however, Ismalia is only on the fringe of the Desert.

After the shortage we had experienced in Macedonia it seemed that every luxury the heart of man could desire on active service could be

obtained in Egypt. We were given fresh meat and bread instead of canned beef and army biscuits, whilst fruit and vegetables arrived daily from Cairo. Each morning we bathed in the picturesque salt-water lakes within easy reach of the camp. In the afternoons we kept up our British reputation for eccentricity by playing football and cricket in the blazing sun. Night found the officers seated at little tables under the trees in the grounds of the delightful French Club, drinking long iced drinks whilst an excellent string orchestra played the latest American ragtime from England.

We ordered smart gabardine uniforms from the local military tailor, and it became of some importance to carry the type of fly whisk in fashion at the moment. Turkish and Egyptian cigarettes, obtained in large quantities from Cairo, replaced Virginian cigarettes which were once more considered "bad form."

All available tennis racquets in Ismalia were eagerly bought up the first day or so, and one Scottish acting major secured a complete set of golf clubs. However, after he had driven two dozen expensive balls into the Desert and failed to find them, he decided to give up golf until either his rank was confirmed, or golf balls dropped in price.

In the midst of all this sporting and social activity I obtained three days' leave to Cairo, and set off by an early train loaded with commissions to execute for various officers of my company.

I put up at Shepherds Hotel, and visited most of the mosques and other places of interest. I was photographed on a camel with the pyramids as a background, and sent home an assorted collection of guaranteed genuine antiquities bought in the native bazaar and probably manufactured either in Birmingham or Chicago. In fact, I behaved like a typical Cook's tourist.

After dinner I sat on the veranda of my hotel, sipping strong black coffee and gazing at the ever-changing panorama of the passing crowds in the streets. In the distance I could see the lighted lanterns twinkling in the trees of Ezbekia Gardens. Carriages drawn by fast-stepping Desert ponies with glistening silvered harness, flashed by with a jingling of bells and a cracking of whips. Now and then a luxurious limousine, bearing some beauty of the hareem but faintly seen, veiled and mysterious, would glide through the traffic, silently. Native guides, water-sellers and vendors of Oriental merchandise, mingled with soldiers in smart summer khaki drill uniforms, their shorts exposing bare knees burnt brown by the sun.

From the Mouski came the weird chanting of some endless Arab song. The air was heavy with the penetrating, aromatic odour of the East.

I drew a deep breath of contentment and sank back amongst the embroidered cushions in my chair. I could fully appreciate the Arab saying: "He who tastes of the waters of the Nile shall return." There is a subtle fascination about the place that is difficult to explain. Since those seeming far-off days I have met many soldiers who have returned from Egypt, some of them broken in health and fortune, men whom one would have thought glad to be safely home again. We have talked together of many things, and then I have casually mentioned Cairo, or perhaps the Desert, and at once a haunted look of longing has come into their eyes, and I know that once again the East is calling.

There is a shrub in England, I forget what it is named, but it has a curiously unpleasant smell. If you take a leaf and crush it in your hands the scent is strangely penetrating and you wish that you had not plucked it; yet each time you pass that bush the inclination to crush another leaf and experience the same revulsion of feeling is almost overpowering. Egypt has for me this same uncanny power of attraction

and repulsion; there were times when I loathed the place with a bitter hatred, and yet I feel that I shall be drawn back there once more before I die.

When I got back to Ismalia I found the 60th Division alive with preparations for a move.

Allenby had just returned from his visit to the Desert with Sir Philip Chetwode who had submitted an appreciation of the strategic situation for the commander-in-chief's approval. General Allenby had formed his own plan of campaign from this report and things were beginning to happen. Generals and brigadiers and other senior staff officers, who had taken up semi-permanent residence in the best hotels in Cairo and Alexandria for, as they thought, "the duration of the war," were galvanized into activity at the front, or departed "forthwith" on early troopships for England.

When an officer was sent back as inefficient, he was said to have received "the order of the bowler hat." One brigadier I knew had the distinction of being awarded "a bar" to his bowler hat!—his second retirement into private life was permanent.

Our last few days in Ismalia were very crowded ones for me, as enormous quantities of

special stores had to be drawn from the ordnance depot in preparation for our march across the Desert. It was just at this time, too, that our share of the 40,000 camels that accompanied the army joined us. As soon as everything was complete we marched to Kantara. Kantara, one of the wonder cities of the war, is on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal. When the campaign started it was a tiny native village containing a mosque and, perhaps, half a dozen mud houses. It grew with extraordinary rapidity and became a vast town capable of housing thousands of men and animals. Where merely sand had been were now first-class macadamized roads, electrically lighted, forty miles of up-to-date railway sidings and workshops, a huge ordnance depot, three churches, two theatres and a moving-picture house, clubs, shops and a golf course, with wharves so spacious that as many as six ocean-going steamers could be unloaded at a time.

The place is called in Arabic, "The Gateway of the Desert." It is at Kantara that the great caravan route commences which stretches right across the Desert of Sinai—the Desert of Sin of the Old Testament—until it gets to El Arish on the coast of the Mediterranean. From there it goes north, past Gaza, on up the Maritime Plain

through Palestine, branches off east to Jerusalem, continues north again to Damascus and, finally, across the Desert of Arabia to where the ancient city of Babylon once proudly stood. It is the oldest caravan route, or roadway, in the whole world and has been used throughout the ages by all who have gone from Egypt into Palestine. It was this way Moses guided the Israelites when they left Egypt, owing to the persecution of Pharaoh. It was along this almost waterless route that the Emperor Napoleon led his army in his attempt to conquer Palestine. As everyone knows, that attempt was a failure, and he brought the remnants of his army back across the Desert, leaving the bones of many of his men to whiten in the sun.

Then, Joseph and Mary and the Infant Christ came back this way on their journey into Egypt to escape Herod.

When British troops first began to march across the barren wilderness of Sinai, conditions were almost unbearable. The chief difficulties were the lack of water, the sun, the sand, and the flies. The semi-tropical heat of the Plains of Macedonia had been but a foretaste of what the blistering sun of the Desert could accomplish in mid-summer. The few wells one meets with

across that dreary waste, whilst sufficient for the comparatively small caravan parties of the past, were totally inadequate for a great modern army like Allenby's, made up of over ninety-six thousand fighting men, forty-six thousand horses, forty thousand camels, fifteen thousand mules and three thousand five hundred donkeys —to say nothing of the vast body of the Egyptian labour corps. It became necessary, therefore, for fresh ideas to be worked out.

The water of the river Nile was drawn from the sweet water canal in Egypt by the Kantara waterworks, where it was mixed with alum, then pumped through settling tanks into filters. When it had successfully passed these, it was pumped underneath the Suez Canal into reservoirs on the eastern bank. Here it was chlorinated and then pumped on by successive stages through a great pipe line which eventually stretched, in the rear of the advancing British army, for over two hundred miles across the Desert of Palestine. There were altogether seventeen auxiliary pumping stations at intervals along this line.

It is rather interesting to know that the pipes used for this purpose were already in Egypt, having been sent there before the war to be

used by the Standard Oil Company of America. We took the oil pipes and used them for water instead. When I was speaking on the Palestine campaign in Philadelphia, in 1923, I met the gentleman at whose works in Pennsylvania these pipes were manufactured. I asked him if the British had ever paid for them, and he assured me we had settled up in full; which, I must say, relieved my mind considerably!

We built a modern railway, too, across the Desert, and this progressed at the rate of a mile a day. London and South Western locomotives, which had been sent out from England in readiness for the advance, were used, and it was rather curious to see these engines, with their own drivers who had accompanied them to Egypt, calmly shunting and backing in the sidings at Kantara just as though they were in Eastleigh or Waterloo Stations.

Sand was one of our greatest difficulties to commence with; we sank up to our knees in the loose sand in places, and even the invaluable Ford ambulances got stalled and became immobile.

The terrible khamseen constantly visited us to add to our troubles with its dry hot wind that tore across the open spaces, whipping the sand

up in huge blinding clouds, making progress well nigh impossible; it took the life and spirit out of almost every officer and man for the days it raged.

After experiencing the khamseen on Sinai Peninsula I visualised for myself the Biblical expression "a howling wilderness."

I never heard the name of the officer responsible for the famous "chicken wire road," but it was one of the most wonderful, and at the same time, simplest devices for minimising fatigue that was ever invented. Early in the war, when it was anticipated that trench warfare would take place in Egypt and Palestine, as in France, the authorities in England sent many tons of rolls of close mesh wire netting to the East to be used for riveting the sides of the trenches to prevent them falling in. But most of the fighting that took place in Palestine was "open warfare" of the old-fashioned kind—we fought on the top of the ground in view of each other, not underneath it in trenches—and so the wire netting was not required, and it remained, apparently useless, on the quays at Alexandria.

This officer's idea was to take three rolls of close mesh chicken wire, unroll them and bind them side by side, flat on the surface of the loose

sand; then to take long wire staples and drive them in, thus making a firm road on which four men could march abreast with perfect comfort, and motorcars and ambulances proceed with speed and safety.

The wire road stretched for over two hundred miles across the Desert into Palestine, and later, when we advanced north up the Maritime Plain, we constructed wire roads in rear of our positions so that the wounded could be brought back from the firing line in motor ambulances more or less in comfort.

It took a year for us to fight our way across the Peninsula of Sinai, but in that time we drove the Turks from over a hundred and fifty miles of Desert, over which we brought a modern railway, laid a pipe line, and made a wire road.

When I came back that way after the armistice, it took me exactly one night to traverse the ground it had taken a year to cross on foot. I travelled in a train almost as luxurious as an American one. We had a diner on board, and you could get a four-course dinner served by Egyptian waiters of the state railway—you could even have afternoon tea if you wished. At night, just before turning in, I pulled up the blind of my sleeping compartment and looked

out over the Desert. It was a wonderful moonlight night; one of those perfect nights you get in the East, just as bright as daylight; and I could see by the side of the track many little wooden crosses. I thought to myself, God bless the boys that lie buried there; they helped to make the passing of their comrades safe and eased the burdens of thousands who went that long, long trail to take their part in the Last Crusade!

Eventually the 60th Division arrived in the fringe of Palestine; my brigade, the 180th, taking up positions along the Wadi Ghuzze. A wadi is a river that usually has no water, and it is this appearance of torrent—bed and banks and clefts in the rocks for tributary streams, and at times even rushes and shrubs fringing its course—which gives to the whole wilderness a doubly dry and thirsty aspect. During the rainy season a complete transformation takes place; great volumes of water tear madly down these previously arid wastes and many of the wadis become impassable.

We had arrived in Palestine to find the Turkish army holding a very strong position stretching from the Mediterranean Sea at Gaza to Beersheba, a distance of about thirty miles.

Gaza had already been attacked twice unsuccessfully and was a strong modern fortress, heavily entrenched and protected with barbed wire, offering every facility for protracted defence.

The houses of the town are mostly on a ridge, and all around the place is a mass of gardens fully a mile deep, each surrounded by high cactus hedges. They afford complete cover and are quite impossible for infantry to penetrate. General Allenby's plan of campaign was roughly this,—to make a show of concentration before Gaza so as to lead the enemy to think that an attack was about to take place there, and all the while to quietly push forward a large force in the direction of Beersheba.

On zero day an intense bombardment was to take place on our left; whilst General Chetwode's 20th Corps, consisting of four infantry divisions and the camel brigade, together with the Desert mounted corps, attacked on the right with the object of capturing Beersheba and rolling up the Turkish line from thence to the sea. By turning the enemy's flank no actual attack on Gaza would be necessary, as the garrison there would have to withdraw once Beersheba fell.

My division was part of the 20th Corps and,

with the 74th, was to have the honour of attacking Beersheba from the Wadi Saba, the other infantry divisions of the corps being held in reserve.

Before the attack actually took place some weeks were spent in active preparation. We trained the men in "water discipline" and underwent what was known as "the hardening process."

We marched for miles and miles over the burning sands under the scorching sun with full equipment, full packs, rifles and full water bottles, but no man was allowed to take a drink from his bottle without the direct orders of an officer. It was difficult sometimes to refrain from giving permission, the heat was so intense, the dust kicked up by the men in front got into their throats, their mouths became parched, and the straps of the heavy packs cut into their shoulders and almost dragged them down.

No one who has not lived in a hot country can understand the important part water plays in a man's life; existence can be maintained on very little food, but water *must* be had. Nevertheless, the quantity required can be considerably reduced by practice, and eventually we were all trained so that, if necessary, we could exist

on a pint of water a day; this serving for all drinking purposes as well as for shaving and washing. After the first day or so practically no shaving or washing took place in the ranks. Then we cut down the animals from three waterings a day to two, and, finally, to one; and this training saved the lives of countless horses and mules that would otherwise have perished when later on in the campaign they had to go without water in some cases for two days at a time.

Shortly after we arrived in Palestine, Major Oxenham was taken ill and I took over command of the brigade machine gun company. About this time too, General Bulfin, who had commanded the London division since we arrived in France, was promoted to command the 21st Corps, and Major-General John Shea, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., became our new divisional commander.

General Shea was a great success with the "Londoners" from the very start. He was young, smart in appearance, and possessed the confident seat of a crack cavalry officer. He was Irish and had a keen sense of humour, he was a soldier who had done splendidly in France, and above all, he was a man who understood the "Tommy" and especially the London

"Tommy": in a word, he was human. I found that this same "human personal touch" counted for a great deal in the war for it was in many respects a war of psychology; and then, too, the men themselves were very different in character to the professional soldiers of other wars.

The London division was a good division before General Shea joined it but it was not by any means a *brilliant* division; perhaps it lacked a little of that *esprit de corps* that all really first-class divisions have. "Jimmie" Shea, as all ranks soon affectionately called him behind his back, was responsible for giving to the "Londoners" that fighting spirit combined with optimism which is called "morale." He gathered us all together like a big family and taught us to fight to the death for the honour of that family. We became willing pupils because we liked him and believed in him.

Whilst the training of the army went on, ammunition and supplies were being stored up behind the line in vast quantities. Trains loaded with shells followed one another in an endless chain across the Desert. The heaviest trains ran at night, and the returning empties were hurried back at a speed suggesting the urgency of clearing the line for fully loaded trains awaiting the

signal to proceed with their valuable cargoes to railhead. Steamers of about twelve hundred tons burden came from Port Said to a cove north of Belah, behind the Gaza line, to ease the railway's task. They anchored 150 yards off shore, and a crowd of small craft passed backwards and forwards with stores. Lower down the coast of the Mediterranean lay the battleships, silent and grimly waiting the signal to take their part in the fight. Like long pale fingers the army roads stretched out towards the front. The Egyptian labour corps was working day and night to make them capable of bearing the heavy guns and tractors destined to follow up the advance.

Is there any time so exciting and stimulating as those last few days before zero? Only the commander-in-chief knew which day the attack was to be launched, but we felt it must be imminent. The great army machine was working at such feverish pressure that something must happen soon. We had all received our orders; each branch of the service knew what was required of it. All we were waiting to know was, "the day."

On the night of October 20, 1917, the air was still and the vast luminous canopy of the sky

was powdered with a thousand twinkling stars. I stood at the opening of my tent drinking in a last mouthful of the cool night air, when, in the distance, I heard the galloping of horses. Despatch riders were arriving at divisional headquarters. It was late for despatches unless the news was urgent. I went over to brigade headquarters and was handed a sealed envelope, for which I signed. The moon was up, I broke the seal—zero day had been fixed for October 31st.

CHAPTER V.

The Wells of Sheria.

The torrid daytime heat of October 30th was followed by an entire absence of that cooling breeze we had learned to look for each evening after the sun went down.

The brilliant moon lit up a land that had been stripped and starved for so many years that its very bones seemed to protrude and its hills to rise from sterile plains in all the nakedness of their bald patches—a carcase of a land.

Desolate and drear, indeed, it looked to us in the ghostly moonlight, as we marched with dogged tiredness over the dried and cracking mud bed of the Wadi Ghuzze, on our way to the place of assembly at Esani. Forty thousand troops were on the march, but a heavy pall of dust that hung over the long lines of infantry and artillery obscured all those save the men immediately to one's front. It was as though some cockney fairy had thoughtfully provided a portion of London's own particular fog for us to take into action so that we might not feel homesick. Soon our faces became caked with

yellow dust, our nostrils hot and burning. We could not relieve our thirst because our water-bottles had to be conserved until Beersheba should be won. At times we overtook caterpillar tractors grunting and groaning as they dragged their giant guns over the broken ground. Sometimes long strings of supply camels, which to our tired eyes seemed twice their normal size, floated silently in a cloud of mist, led by mysterious white-robed figures. All that we saw seemed distorted because of our lack of sleep.

All through the night the muffled tramp of marching infantry went on. Away to our right the Australian and New Zealand cavalry were working round to the south and east of Beersheba. They had to cover over thirty miles, but the men were keen and the horses in excellent condition for the task.

A purple flush that threw into high relief the southern end of the Judean hills, heralding the dawn, found every man hidden in his appointed place, whether in wadi bed or fold in the ground.

At 6.00 A. M. our divisional artillery opened up with a great volume of fire that put fresh heart into all of us, and especially encouraged those battalions which, with bayonets fixed,

awaited their orders to advance. It thrilled me to hear the staccato rattle of my machine guns taking their part. There is a peculiar quality in automatic gun fire that causes the report to penetrate the din of even an artillery barrage.

At 8.30 A. M. our aeroplanes reported the enemy wire was cut in front, and the 181st Brigade swept forward to the attack, their cockney shouts ringing out as they scrambled over uneven ground towards the hill that was their goal. In ten minutes they had captured it at the point of the bayonet, and a battery of field guns was being galloped up to fire point blank over open sights at the retreating Turks.

Soon afterwards the 74th Division advanced and secured their objectives.

The noise of bursting shells was now terrific as the heavy artillery on both sides put down barrages. On our right flank the cavalry, in a cloud of dust, could be seen galloping forward. The Australian light horse brigade had received orders to take Beersheba from the east. The trenches guarding this side of the town were well manned and strongly held, but the Australians carried them with an irresistible charge. They dismounted, cleared the first line of all the enemy in it, ran on, and captured the

second and third system of trenches; and then, their horses having been brought up, galloped into Beersheba to prevent, if they could, the destruction of the wells. The first phase of the campaign had been a brilliant success. Considering the type of fighting, the casualties had not been excessive; everything had worked out according to plan, and evening found us firmly established in Beersheba, with the entire left wing of the sultan's army in full retreat.

Later on we heard that the Turks had been completely deceived by General Allenby's strategy. For some time past they had been concentrating troops behind Gaza, where they fully anticipated the principal attack would be launched.

Our taking of Beersheba was a great blow to them, as it exposed their left flank in enfilade; consequently they were forced to do just as we thought they would—withdraw their whole army north up the Maritime Plain, leaving the stronghold of Gaza to fall into our hands without a struggle.

In capturing Beersheba we secured the wells that were dug there by Abraham, the head of the Jewish race, thirty-seven centuries ago. On the death of the patriarch, Abraham, the Philis-

tines attempted to render the wells useless by filling them up with sand. The Turks also planned to destroy them before they evacuated Beersheba, only they employed more modern methods. They carefully mined each well but were driven out by the encircling movement of the cavalry before they could fire the fuses. And so the ancient wells of Abraham gave forth water to us, as they have given forth water throughout the ages to all who have passed that way.

After Beersheba, commenced a running fight that was only halted when the Turks reached their main defence line outside the Holy City itself.

There is a saying in the Bible "from Dan to Beersheba"; we reversed the process and went from Beersheba to Dan, and many miles beyond!

Having secured a valuable water supply we hastened to fill up our camel water convoy and trek after the enemy with as little delay as possible.

The reserve water for the army was carried in copper cisterns called "fanatis," each holding about fifteen gallons. These metal tanks were suspended by rings from each side of the camel's pack saddle, 30,000 camels being employed for this purpose alone.

The pack camel is a very slow-moving creature, especially when he is fully loaded. It was of the greatest importance that the infantry should follow up the recent victory with all speed to prevent the enemy re-organising. Therefore, we soon outdistanced our camel water convoy, lost touch with them, and marched for a whole day without water.

The day previous we had had half a bottle of drinking water each, the following day our bottles hung empty at our sides. That day turned out to be one of the hottest of the year. We marched along a track over the Desert strewn with dead oxen, many of these animals having been employed by the enemy in a vain endeavour to drag his heavy guns to safety. Swarms of flies settled on the putrid bodies, the stench from which made the strongest of us vomit from nausea. We had the greatest difficulty in dragging our tired limbs through the clogging sand. The sun blazed pitilessly from a brazen sky, whilst overhead birds of prey, driven for a while from their unexpected feast, waited to swoop down again directly we had passed.

Our heads ached and our eyes became bloodshot and dim in the blinding glare reflected from

the sand. After a time our tongues began to swell so that they seemed to fill the insides of our mouths, which had gone dry. It was with difficulty that we could speak.

Then our lips commenced to swell; they turned a purplish black and burst; sand blew in the open cuts and flies persistently settled on the wounds, driving us almost mad.

Some of the men went temporarily blind from the glare of the sun, the sand, and the lack of water; a few fell out by the wayside, and these we never saw again. I had previously warned my company that it would be impossible to leave anyone behind to look after stragglers, and so the blinded men linked arms with others not as badly affected as themselves, and by this means managed to keep up with the column.

On the morning of November 6th, with no news of our missing camel convoy, the attack on Sheria was launched. We all knew of the wells Sheria contained, and that, unless we captured the place before nightfall, many of us would die of thirst. The Turks were holding on to Sheria like grim death, because they realised that if they gave it up they would have to retreat over many miles of waterless desert with a depleted transport. We fought that day as men fight for their lives.

Wave after wave of infantry went forward only to break on the enemy's guns, re-form again and advance once more towards its objective. I was observing through my field glasses when the final and successful assault took place, but could not see anything as my eyes suddenly became blurred and useless. We entered Sheria Station practically on the heels of the retreating Turks. The first objects that met our view were the great stone cisterns in the station yard filled with tons of cold, clear drinking water. In the still night air the sound of water running into the tanks could be distinctly heard, maddening in its tantalising nearness; yet not a man murmured when orders were given for the various battalions to be fallen in, in line, two deep facing the stone cisterns, while the wounded and the animals were led away to a separate place set aside for the transport.

Then came the officers and men detailed for outpost duty who would have to guard the camp that night; all these were given water first.

The remainder of us fell in by companies, officers in the ranks with their men, shoulder to shoulder. It took four hours before the last man had a drink of water, and in all that time we had been standing just about seven yards

from a low stone wall on the other side of which were thousands of gallons of water; yet not a single man broke from the ranks or tried to get a drink out of his turn.

In the Bible one reads constantly of water, and it is always spoken of as one of the most wonderful things in life. As a boy I used to wonder why so much importance was attached to water, but you quickly realise the value of water in Palestine, especially if you happen to be fighting out there! I believe we all learned our first real Bible lesson on that march from Beersheba to Sheria wells.

CHAPTER VI.

KISMET.

The camel is a peculiar creature; he neither inspires nor seeks affection of any kind. He carries himself with a studied air of conscious superiority to all around him; yet, within, he is a mass of nerves and as sensitive and awkward as an English school-girl at her first party. He bitterly resents cold and wet weather, and whilst possessing all the outward attributes of a hardy animal, he is in reality extremely delicate and apt to become easily discouraged. On the other hand, he can stand any amount of pain, hardship and fatigue, and possesses more downright stubbornness than any army mule. I can understand people, under certain circumstances, growing fond of beetles, rats or spiders; I cannot imagine anyone in the world, however lonely, making a pet of a camel.

Thirty-five camels were attached to my machine gun company for the purpose of carrying water, rations and a reserve supply of ammunition. They were led by natives from Egypt and Africa known as "naffers." The

bas reis, or native overseer, armed with a large buffalo hide whip, acted as sergeant in charge of the camel transport, and was provided for this purpose with a special riding camel of a smaller and faster type than the ordinary pack camel. The *bas reis* also acted as interpreter when required.

During one of the smaller fights on our way up to the Maritime Plain—we had scraps with the rear-guard of the retreating Turkish army almost every day—I very nearly lost my entire camel transport. It happened in this way:

I was standing on a hill watching the operations. It was during the early stages, and my reserve sections of machine gunners, their guns loaded on mules, were under cover waiting to reinforce the line if necessary. To my right, also on a hill, the brigadier had established his headquarters, easily distinguished by the red three-cornered flag on a bamboo lance stuck in the reverse slope.

By the way, I once heard an officer in a musketry class at Grantham describe a brigadier's flag as "the triangle of error;" it was not until I had served under two or three brigadiers that I realised how suitable the title was.

The Turks were putting up a stiff fight and

my guns were going all out, tapping with very few intervals between prolonged bursts of fire. This was eating up my ammunition, and I waited rather impatiently for my camels to return. I had sent them back to refill at the divisional ammunition column and they should have appeared in sight before now. Meanwhile, belt box mules were being dispatched down a wadi with the first reserve supply of filled belts from company headquarters. I anxiously swept the surrounding country with my glasses and at last spotted my camels approaching in single file, carefully picking their way round the reverse slope of a hill to the west of the one on which I stood. They got within a mile or so of my headquarters and then, instead of turning down the wadi as they should have done, they kept straight on, thus bringing themselves under direct observation of the Turks. Soon they were calmly advancing along the open space between the enemy line and our men, whom I could see crawling forward to the attack.

The Turks were hiding behind stone boulders and low walls they had constructed, called "sangars," waiting for us to come on.

I jumped on a horse and galloped in the direction of my camels, expecting to find on arrival

most of them dead, which would have been a very serious loss to me, especially at that time when they could not easily have been replaced. The *bas reis* must have lost his head completely and all sense of direction, too! The camels made a wonderful target, standing out in bold relief in the clear atmosphere of early morning. Just as I got up to them the Turks found the correct range, and machine gun and rifle bullets came whistling through the air. Some of the wretched animals were hit at once, luckily not in vital places, however. I saw one that had four bullet wounds in his legs. The blood poured from the holes but the camel did not appear to mind in the least; he just shook himself impatiently as though he had been stung by some noxious insect, and quietly went on nibbling at a patch of grass growing in the Desert at his feet. We quickly got him under cover and plugged up his wounds with absorbent cotton wool soaked in iodine, and five minutes afterwards he was really none the worse for his baptism of fire.

A few days later one of my officers, as a joke, burst an inflated paper bag in a camel's face. The creature was frightened to death, had an attack of hysteria, and was on the sick list for two weeks before he completely recovered!

Another little incident which perhaps illustrates even more the peculiarities of the camel, is this: In all parts of Palestine there still exist large caverns; some are hewn out of the solid rock, but others are pits that have been dug in the ground and cemented round the inside. The walls are concave, a small opening being left at the top which can be completely covered by a rolling stone. They were first constructed in Egypt over two thousand years before Christ, after Joseph had foretold Pharaoh's dream as "seven years of plenty" followed by "seven lean years." On Joseph's advice they were filled with grain harvested in the good years, so that there was "corn in Egypt" during the great famine when there was little to be obtained elsewhere.

When the Israelites migrated to Palestine they also dug large granaries there as a precautionary measure, and to this day you will find these caverns in all parts of the Holy Land. Very few of them are in use now and most of them have fallen into decay. In some cases the sides have crumbled away, causing them to become awkward traps for wanderers in the dusk, especially as they are usually to be found by the sides of the mountain tracks. One day

on the march I was riding in rear of my transport section when I noticed that one of the naffers had led his camel out of the line of march and was heading straight for one of these ancient granaries. One side of it had fallen in, and no doubt during the passage of hundreds of years had become gradually silted up; so that from the near side there was a gentle slope into the cavern, whereas on the far side the wall rose in its original concave manner, almost closing in the top. Camel leaders had a habit of marching along with their heads down, not looking where they were going, possibly dreaming of their homes in Soudan. I decided to say nothing but to teach the man a lesson if I could; so I sat on my horse and waited to see what he would do when he found himself with his camel in this trap. It was the camel, however, and not the man that proved of most interest in the end. When he got up to the wall in front of him he just looked at it; a most peculiar expression came over his face—and a camel can look extremely peculiar at times—then he trembled violently all over and sat down.

I shouted to the man in Arabic, directing him to off-load the camel and get him out, but although neither the man nor the camel was

hurt in the slightest degree, and all the camel had to do was just to get up, turn round, and walk out again, the ridiculous animal refused to move. Ten minutes afterwards he was dead; he had died entirely of fright and despair! He had been accustomed all his life to the top of the ground; it was a great shock to find himself in such a hole.

I was very annoyed at losing this particular pack camel, as he happened to carry a few comforts for the officers' mess; for, whilst there was no prohibition in Egypt, supplies were very difficult to obtain just then. So I told the naffer he deserved to be shot for his stupidity and rode on to rejoin my company. That night, just before I turned in, Sergeant-Major Parsons came to my tent and told me the *bas reis* was outside with a native who wished to see the commanding officer. I slipped on my tunic again and stepped out of the tent.

The *bas reis* saluted gravely and said:

"Dis man, Sar, name Abdul Ahmed, 'im come for you to shoot 'im, because 'im lose gammel; 'im wait for you kill 'im!"

"Tell him," I replied, "that I think it is very good of him to turn up like this. I will not shoot him now, but he must never be so stupid again. Say he can go."

The *bas reis* repeated what I had said in Arabic; Abdul beamed all over, evidently delighted at not being shot there and then, and replied at some length with expressive gestures.

"What does he say now?" I enquired. The *bas reis* interpreted. "'Im say, 'im tank you very much; 'im hope you become lord and very big general; 'im also hope all your children become little generals."

"Thank him very much for his wishes," I replied and returned to my tent.

I must confess that at that period of the campaign the idea of becoming a general myself was not unpleasant, but that any future offspring I might be blessed with should have the exalted rank of generals, too, was rather terrifying! Anyone who has ever had any experience with children or generals, I am sure, will agree with me—both are extremely difficult to manage.

We all grew very fond of our camel leaders as time went on; they sang their quaint Arab songs on the march, and the "Tommies" joined in the choruses which they very rapidly picked up.

The Egyptian labour corps was composed of men conscripted for a definite period of service.

To them the war was of little interest, except that it was keeping them from their wives and families. A favourite song of theirs commenced, "*Kam Lealo, Kam yaum?*" (How many days, how many nights?)—meaning how long would their work continue before they would be free to return to their Desert homes. The soloist, who was apparently the comedian of the party, would first reply, "A hundred years!"—at which there would be much wailing and wringing of hands. The chorus then repeated, "How many days, how many nights?" whereupon the soloist would reduce the period of waiting to, say, twenty years, then ten, and so on until on being asked for the final time, "How many days, how many nights?" he replied, "One day, one night." The whole crowd of natives would then clap their hands with delight, and the song was ended.

One afternoon, as the company wound its way among the drab Judean hills, I noticed there seemed even more laughter and applause than usual coming from the camel men, so I asked the *bas reis* to interpret the song. The chorus were singing, "Here comes the British master"; whereupon the soloist would reply, "Bring whisky, bring soda"—showing that these poor

ignorant heathens had a pretty good idea of the requirements of *some* of their British masters.

When the bad weather came the songs of the naffers ceased; like the animals they led, they were unable to stand the cold and the wet. They wore thin cotton garibeers with practically no underclothes; they had bare heads and bare feet. They had been perfectly wonderful on the long march across the hot sands of the Desert but the rocks of Palestine cut their feet to ribbons, the cold pierced through their soaked garments like a sword, and many of them fell out by the wayside to die of exposure. Like all the actions of these nomads, there was grace and beauty even in their preparations for death.

I could always tell when one of my naffers had got to the end of his tether. First he would secure his camel by the leading rope to the pack saddle of the camel immediately in front; then, with a gentle caressing pat that passed entirely unnoticed by the unresponsive beast he had tended and guided over so many long and weary miles, he would take his farewell, which, in its way, was just as full of chivalry and romance as the impassioned speech to his steed of some medieval knight stricken on the field of battle. With slow steps he would pick his way to the

side of the track, carefully select a place for his last moments on earth, squat down, pull the skirt of his garibeer over his head, murmur a prayer to Allah and very shortly afterwards he would be dead. It seemed as though he had definitely made up his mind he was unable to continue the march, too sick and miserable to live, and had just willed himself to die.

It was "Kismet" and nothing could be done.

It is extraordinary the will-power these men of the East possess. I remember a native I had up before me for some small crime he had committed—everything a soldier does wrong in the army is called a crime if it is found out—and I had awarded a minor punishment. However, the naffer considered he was not guilty, and requested me to remit the penalty. I told him I had decided he *was* guilty and the punishment would stand.

Whereupon he replied with dignity and a certain wistful sadness, "My master does not believe me, therefore I shall die!" Well, I certainly did not believe *that* statement and I told the sergeant-major to march him out.

Two hours later this man was found just outside the camp in a recumbent position under a palm tree—dead! His garibeer had been care-

fully wrapped round his head, which had fallen forward on his knees. He must have gone from my presence with the fixed conviction that he had been unjustly treated, decided that under these conditions life was not worth living; and, after making all preparations for the Great Beyond, steadily willed himself to die.

CHAPTER VII.

David and Goliath.

I gave one last long pull at my fast disappearing cigarette before I threw it regretfully away. It fell amongst the rocks, where it gave a tiny firework display, and then went out.

I started to climb in the direction of my tent, and then stopped, and half leaning, half sitting on a large, smooth, white boulder, gazed up the valley.

The camp of the division lay before me like some wonderful panorama, mysterious and strangely attractive in the half light cast by the moon as she rose over the eucalyptus trees at the entrance to the pass. Resembling huge glow-worms, the camp fires were dotted about on either side of the wild mountain track that leads from Latron to Enab and forms part of the famous Jaffa-Jerusalem road. The cool evening breeze that came now, as it did most nights, bringing refreshment and a sense of rest after the heat and glare of the day, fanned into life the embers of the neglected cook-house fires.

Here and there amongst the countless lines of

bivouac tents, pitched row above row on the narrow terraces of the Judean hills, the tiny light of a candle, flickering in the wind, showed the position of a guard tent or where the picquet slept.

Now and then the stillness of the night would be broken by the neighing of a horse or the impatient stamping of a mule on the transport lines in the valley. As the animals shook their heads, the steel head chains rattled, giving forth a silvery sound that was very pleasant to the ear. A small mountain stream trickled over the stones by the side of the road. Strange! how unreal and almost ghostly the noise of running water seemed after the many, many miles of parched and waterless country over which we had come.

The stream apparently started in the deep shadow of the eucalyptus trees where the well of Latron lay, half hidden by thick green foliage. The guns that rendered such splendid service in the capture of Beersheba and the taking of Sheria, barking and grunting out their messages of death and appearing like live things in the dust and smoke of battle, now stood in silent lines, swathed in canvas sheets. The men they had fought for and guarded against attack slept; and one could almost imagine that they were sleeping too, taking what rest they could before

dawn snould find them rumbling forward over the stony roads again. Further back along the path, the tall forms of the camels could be seen silhouetted against the rising moon.

The coolness of the eastern night had laid its hand gently and softly over all these sleeping thousands.

I rather wondered what dreams they dreamed in their little bivouacs crowded so closely together. Some would be sleeping peacefully, worn out by the marching and the work of the day, but others, with brains more active or natures more excitable, would be living over again experiences of the past. The war had brought strange changes in all their lives.

It was a London division, and most of our men were shop boys or clerks of London Town. Had any premonition ever come to any of them, as they sold half yards of calico or entered up columns of figures in their ledgers in pre-war days, of what the future had in store? They came from every part of the city, and most of them had lived in depressing little houses set in dreary suburban streets before the call for men had brought them in their thousands to join for the duration of the war. Could anything be more unromantic than the original environment of

these soldiers of Allenby's, whose exploits in Palestine would be handed down as history throughout all the ages?

When I was an actor in London, playing at some outlying theatre, I had often glanced in at a typical suburban home. The first things that attracted notice were the starched lace curtains serving as a frame for a little table set in the window, on which some imitation fruit under a glass shade rested on a wool mat.

Then, if one were inquisitive enough to press one's face close to the window and take a further view, and I must confess I have often done this, one discovered strange furniture in the dim interior beyond. Early Victorian in design and upholstered in stamped velvet or shiny black leather, it looked thoroughly uncomfortable.

An extremely woolly skin mat lay in front of the fireplace, which was filled with paper flowers. The overmantel looking-glass had a bunch of tulips painted on it, and below, a marble clock, guarded by two severe cut-glass ornaments, gave a last touch to a picture that was one of depressing respectability. One could only suppose that the family did not attempt to live in the front parlour but probably inhabited the kitchen at the back of the house, a slightly more human-looking

place opening onto a long tank-like garden in which were a clothes line, a rabbit hutch and some withered geraniums in pots.

A very good view of these gardens, and sometimes of the kitchens, could be obtained from the trains that ran incessantly to and from the metropolis.

Now and then an attempt had been made to beautify and add a touch of romance, but for the most part the effect was sordid and uninspiring in the extreme. One wondered what the daily lives of people who lived in such surroundings could be. A hurried breakfast before catching the early train for the city, a long monotonous day spent in office or store, a short break for lunch, enlivened by dominoes at some cheap restaurant in close proximity to one's business house, and then the crowded train back home again. One day would follow another with deadening sameness, relieved once a year during the summer by a fortnight spent at some popular over-crowded seaside resort such as Margate or Southend.

These people's lives were apparently mapped out for them by fate and neatly entered up in books of destiny, as dull and uninteresting as the ledgers they kept in their dismal London offices.

And then some genie, beneficent or evil—who could say?—had cast a spell, and "hey presto" from Balham and Upper Tooting to the plains of Philistia and the hills of Judea. From stuffy little bedrooms in Kennington, where the smoke-laden fog crept in at half-open windows, to deep slumber in the clear night air on the mountain-side of a pass leading from Jaffa to the Holy City, with the star-lit sky of the mysterious East as a canopy, and a thousand memories of all the gallant crusaders that had passed that way to bring a touch of romance to one's dreams and inspire one's waking hours. I remembered well when these "Londoners" had first arrived in France. Then they had been pale, delicate-looking boys; now they were strong, confident, sunburned men with the fearless eyes of those that had met dangers only to overcome them, had looked upon death and been unafraid. Never again would the form of a pompous shop walker scare them. In the future the displeasure of a head clerk would find them undismayed, for was not the whole might of the Turkish sultan's army fleeing before them? Would not the morrow find them marching forward to capture Jerusalem and free Palestine from oppression for all time?

Such men would find it hard to return to the

drudgery and slavery of office and shop when the Great War should be ended; great tact, great forbearance would be required in handling these demobilised Londoners, but most of all great understanding.

I glanced at my wrist watch; the light of the moon, which now hung like some serene and steady lantern in the sky, showed how late the hour was. As I turned, almost unwillingly, towards my tent again, I noticed a small group of machine gunners seated outside a bivouac listening to an old soldier who was evidently telling them a story. I moved a little nearer and listened too; I was rather interested to know what this story might be that was keeping my tired men from their blankets and the short rest they would get before the division moved on again at dawn.

It was a cockney version of the fight between David and the giant Goliath; the facts were quite correct, but the expressions used and method of telling it were rather more picturesque and vivid than the Bible account with which I was familiar. Nevertheless, it stirred up old memories that had lain dormant for many years, and I realised all at once that I had probably pitched my camp on precisely the same spot where the

Israelites and Philistines had faced each other so many centuries ago. I hurried to my tent and got from my valise the Bible my mother gave me when I left for France, and read how:—

> The Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, and there was a valley between them! The giant Goliath came out and offered battle, and David chose five smooth stones out of the brook. "I come in the name of the God of the armies of Israel," said David, and he slung one of the stones and killed Goliath.

With the words of the old story fresh in my mind, I climbed from terrace to terrace down the rocky sides of the pass, until I reached the brook at the foot of it. The moonlight caused everything to appear as clear and distinct as in the daytime. Out of curiosity I searched in the bed of the stream and found two round, smooth pebbles. I put them in the pocket of my tunic and kept them through the campaign for luck. I have them still!

I was over three years in Palestine. During that time I explored every river and stream in the country—there are not many; but I think perhaps it is rather interesting to know that the

brook which runs through the valley at Latron is the only one where it is possible to find stones similar to those David placed in his sling to kill the giant Goliath.

CHAPTER VIII.

Through Bible Lands.

The sun, like a great ball of fire, was rising in stately majesty behind the hills where Jerusalem is, as we set out from Latron over the parched white chalk road that rises at every step until its highest point is reached at Kuryet el Enab. The rumble of gun carriages and loaded limbers as they turned into the line of march from the shadow of the eucalyptus trees, where they had been parked for the night, resembled distant thunder.

Staff officers and company commanders rode back and forth along the columns, marshalling their men and getting the pack animals properly in line. In a cloud of dust the brigadier cantered by to take his place at the head of the brigade.

Our chargers arched their necks and tossed their heads with almost as much spirit as they had shown in those happy days on the transport lines before the big advance, when rations had been plentiful and work not too arduous. Two days' rest at Latron, together with an excellent supply of good water, had worked wonders for them.

Just as we men had set out from peaceful easy-going England to match our strength against the wily Turk in the fastness of his mountain home, so had these carefully reared horses been transplanted from cosy thatched barns and rich lush meadows to the burning sands of the Desert and waterless plains of Philistia. Is it to be wondered at if, at times, both man and beast felt something of the inequality of the conflict? Fortunately, just as this feeling of depression came stealing over one, and this usually occurred towards the end of a particularly trying march on an empty stomach, one remembered that the Crusaders had experienced just such privations and hardships similar to those we were going through now; and were we not descendants of those same Crusaders—just as the horses we rode were descended from the English stock that had furnished chargers for King Richard and his knights and warriors?

When one realised this, all the old fighting spirit came rushing back again, "morale" was once more re-established, and one struggled on for the last few miles with renewed strength. The sun blazed down just as fiercely, the flies attacked in their myriads as before, one's feet became even more blistered, raw and bleeding,

but the longest day must have an ending; and oh! the relief it was on reaching one's destination to throw one's heavy pack and equipment off, to stretch one's tired limbs lying full length on the ground, whilst the camp fires crackled and the appetising aroma of cooked meat and vegetables came forth to soothe and comfort. And later, as night came on and a cooling breeze sprang up, how delightful to dip one's tin mug in the steaming dixies of tea the cooks handed round; and then, after long indrawn breaths at the indispensable cigarette, to close one's aching eyes in peaceful oblivion, all the discomforts of the day already forgotten!

The entire way to Enab leads uphill, the road winding through rocky gorges on either side of which the ground rises almost sheer; but here and there a wadi fringed with half a dozen almond trees, or perhaps a cluster of fig trees, intersects the road. The shade cast by the trees is cool and inviting, and emphasises the barrenness of the surrounding country. Sometimes we would pass Bedouins with clear-cut features and grave, incurious eyes, standing in silent contemplation of the British invaders.

The Arabs of Palestine are descendants of Ishmael, "whose hand was against every man," and

they never seem to have quite forgotten this ancient grudge. They live in large brown-striped tents of camel hair; their women do not wear yashmaks and are distinguished by faint blue tattoo marks on their bronzed chins; they have large soft eyes, small well-shaped hands and feet, and slender beautiful figures; their necklaces of gold or silver coins represent the wealth of their husbands. The men are very fond of singing. I do not think the women sing so frequently, at least I have seldom heard them. Some of the Arab boys have wonderful voices and their songs, possessing a peculiar and not unattractive monotony, hold a delicate enchantment of their own. They are full of the solemn imagery of the Desert, they tell of great spaces, of endless longing and disappointment.

It is curious that in a land of sunshine such as Palestine one should find so much sadness.

Now and then, on the march, we would come across a husbandman tilling a cleared terrace on the mountainside; his plough, the cumbersome wooden implement of the Old Testament, with possibly an ox and an ass yoked together to draw it. In spite of the heavy marching and the intense heat, there was a feeling of exhilaration as the higher ground was reached. So many

months had been passed on the Desert sands or in the plains, that the widening horizons, which the more commanding heights presented, were very invigorating.

During one of our halts, after packs had been cast aside, some of us looked back along the way we had come. In the far distance, right down in the Maritime Plain, we could see the tiny seaport town of Jaffa surrounded by cool orange groves, save on that side where the white houses crowded closely together, seeming to hang over the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

But between Jaffa and the hills of Judea were many miles of sunburnt wastes, and these had all been left behind. Before us, getting ever nearer, was our one great goal, the Holy City of Jerusalem.

God seemed very near to all of us in the Judean hills. There were times during the early days in France when war had seemed so beastly that I longed for the smell of the theater once more in my nostrils. It is a form of nostalgia that all who spend the greater portion of their lives in the playhouse suffer from. Nostalgia of the theater is responsible for bringing back many old favourites of the footlights after the passage of years has robbed them of attractiveness and dulled their artistry.

This irresistible spell is made up of the scents of canvas and size, dust and the hot paint on electric bulbs, grease paint and powder and bare boards. But now that I had become so much a part of the army machine, how should I fit in with civilian life again, I wondered?

I loosened the girths of my horse and walked amongst my men to find out how they were getting on. Everywhere I was met with smiles; some of the poor fellows had very bad feet, I knew, but none would own up until the end of the march. They had no intention of being left behind or sent back to Latron, where a "rest camp" and "casualty clearing station" had been established, and so miss the fight for Jerusalem. *Esprit de corps* was strong in all of them. The 180th Machine Gun Company had a proud boast, "not a single man had fallen out unless he had fallen out insensible." That record was kept throughout all the fighting in Palestine.

The country we were marching through now was a splendid incentive, too; why, every hill and valley, road and stream was hallowed by sacred memories. Old Bible stories I had read as a boy at my mother's knee and almost forgotten came back with a new meaning. I realised the Bible was not only a beautifully written account of the

lives and adventures of certain holy men, but a true history of events that had actually taken place on the very ground over which we were marching. This influence of the country, where almost every day one came across a confirmation of holy writ, was affecting my men, too. I shall never forget, on going the rounds of my little camp one evening, coming across one of my gunners, a rather tough customer who had given me some trouble in the training camp at Grantham, on his knees beside his bivouac offering up his prayers under the luminous beauty of the stars.

In the peaceful years which, please God, would follow this terrible war, should I not miss the peculiar and indescribable allurement of troops on the march? Would not the recollection of it drag my heart and memory back again with overwhelming force and longing to those bittersweet days in Palestine? It was the scent of khaki drill uniforms and leather equipment, of rifle oil and the white dust of the roads, of transport animals, and the sweat of men's bodies, and the hateful lingering smells of eastern villages coming from afar. Before 1914, and even during the early part of my service career, I would have been both offended and disgusted with experiences which now had a deep attraction for

me. Was it that the outer layers of supersensitive insincerity and decadent refinement were wearing thin, allowing some of my truer nature within to assert itself, or just a growing indifference to the niceties of civilised life? Whatever it was, I knew my life had become fuller and more vital in every way. Never again would I patronisingly refer to those whose opportunities for education and advancement had not been so great as my own, as "the common people"! Why, these same common people were winning the war, and doing it with a smile and a contempt for danger and privation that was the very essence of what chivalry and gentle breeding taught.

We halted for a time at Kuryet el Enab, "the hill of grapes," where divisional headquarters were established; and then my brigade branched off in a northeasterly direction along the ancient Roman road to Biddu: guides would be met there to lead the various units to their allotted areas in the line. This Roman road turned out to be nothing more than a thin path, only differing from the ground on either side in that it had been partly cleared of loose rocks. The scenery now became more wild and interesting than any we had passed on the march. To our left a deep valley wound about in majestic disorder, at the

bottom of which was a great desolate wadi with shelving sides.

Fighting had taken place the previous day, and on the banks of the wadi many camels and mules, dead and rotting, together with Turkish transport wagons and gun limbers splintered by shells showed where the enemy in retreat had been caught by our field guns.

A narrow neck of land connects the village of Biddu with the hill on which the mosque of Nebi Samwil stood. Brigade headquarters were to be at Biddu, so I left one section of machine guns there, taking the remaining three sections with me to Nebi Samwil. Night now descended suddenly, as it does in the East. Men and mules, fagged out by the long and tiring march, slipped and stumbled as they advanced over the uneven ground. Enemy snipers, alert with the rising moon, were busy in the almond groves of El Jib. Now and then the spiteful ping of a rifle bullet sounded as it struck the rocks. The mosque towered before us, fantastic and silent. Prowling along in the shelter of its numerous stone walls were jackals in search of food. Frequently their dark forms could be distinguished as they passed through a patch of moonlight. The incessant wail they set up, at times ending in an unearthly

shriek, accentuated the desolate nature of the ruins which were to be our resting place that night.

Up narrow stony goat paths men and animals dragged their weary limbs, until, at length, we reached some rough rocky ledges where gun stores could be off-loaded. We made a short halt whilst the cooks hurriedly prepared tea; and then the various gun teams, manhandling their guns and belt boxes, set off in the wake of guides for the shallow trenches and gaps in the wall, temporary emplacements where the guns could be mounted for the night, to be changed to more convenient positions the following day.

I visited all the gun teams to see that my men were as comfortable as possible under the circumstances, and then came back to where my servant had erected my bivouac between two huge boulders. "Have you had your tea yet?" I asked him. "Not yet, sir," replied Private Sale. "I've been cooking up some bully beef for you with some onions I got at Latron. I'll get my tea afterwards." He limped painfully away, and soon returned with quite an appetising concoction in the lid of a mess tin.

After hovering about anxiously to see that the meal he had prepared was all right, and putting

some final touches to my bed to make it as restful as the nature of the ground permitted, he wearily dragged his blistered feet over the sharp rocks to the cook-house where he drew his ration of tea, now stone cold from waiting in the open dixie. Having drunk it, he slowly unfastened the straps of his valise, took out his blanket, and winding it tightly round himself, lay down in the open to sleep.

I had ridden a horse, Sale had marched all the way with full equipment and a rifle, handicapped in addition by bent legs and bad feet—yet he had found room in his overweighted pack for the onions because he thought I should like them.

What can one do with fellows like that?

CHAPTER IX.

Emmaus.

Nebi Samwil is the highest point in all Palestine. It rises in a serried mass of rocky terraces to an elevation of nearly three thousand feet. It is the place of the birth and death of the Prophet Samuel, hence the name—Nebi in Arabic signifying prophet, and Samwil, Samuel. It is also the Mizpah of the Old Testament.

From the slopes of this hill Samuel judged Israel for seven years, and when he died he was buried there. Many years afterward certain devout Moslems erected a beautiful mosque on the crest of Nebi Samwil to commemorate his memory.

This mosque, with its tall, graceful minaret, was a landmark for many miles around and would have proved an excellent observation post for us, had we made use of it.

No one was allowed inside, however, or permitted to mount the spiral stone staircase of the minaret. In this way it was hoped to guard the sacred edifice from destruction by the enemy. A splendid view of the surrounding country could be obtained from the base of the mosque.

Night had obscured the landscape when we took over on November 25th, but dawn was breaking the following morning as I stood in the shadow of the wall on the southeastern side and gazed across the hills and valleys toward Jerusalem.

The rising sun flecked with patches of gold the numerous spires and domes and minarets. The Holy City looked like some fairy place imagined in a dream. Earthbound clouds of mist, slowly becoming more faint and ethereal with the increasing warmth of day, cut off from view the lower portions of the buildings and outer walls so that they seemed suspended in the sky, requiring but the slightest puff of wind to make them vanish too, like a mirage seen in the Desert.

I leaned over the low stone parapet, and with deep indrawn breaths filled my whole being with the mystery and wonder of this glorious panorama unfolding itself slowly before me.

I was standing where Richard the Lion-hearted must have stood during the third crusade, seven centuries before. Richard I set out from Acre along the Jaffa-Jerusalem road with trumpets sounding and banners waving, buoyed up with great hopes and a firm resolve to free the Holy City from the infidel; but fate had

intervened, causing the king to turn aside and cover his face in the bitterness of his disappointment. He dare not gaze upon a prize he knew was not for him. In all the years since then, Jerusalem had successfully resisted every Christian army of invasion. But where the king had refused to look, I, humble soldier of Allenby's, would look my fill; I was troubled with no such doubts as his. Something within told me that where those other crusades had failed, ours should succeed. Where this strange confidence came from I cannot say; all I know is that I felt it with every nerve and fibre of my being.

On December 1st the Turks made three violent attempts to recapture Nebi Samwil, "the key to Jerusalem." Every attempt was beaten off. Prior to these assaults our hill was subjected to continuous shell fire and the famous mosque reduced to ruins, a whole company of infantry being buried by the falling walls. Shell after shell tore through the air with a wailing sound as though the very projectiles deprecated the desecration they were causing. For some considerable time the minaret stood, and then it, too, came crashing down. The dust and smoke hung like a heavy pall, almost entirely obliterating our field of view.

Under cover of this screen large quantities of Turks advanced right up the slopes to where those of us who had escaped the shells crouched in the shallow trenches or behind piles of *debris*, ready to meet them with hand grenades or bayonets.

My machine guns rapped out their continuous messages of death, like ghastly typewriters whose bloody letters all who ran might read on the white stones of the hillside. One sergeant, whose entire gun team had become casualties, sat at his gun alone surrounded by the corpses of his comrades. His ammunition was getting low, he could not leave the gun, and had no one to send for a fresh supply. Just as his last belt was running through the feed block, a giant Turk appeared over the crest of the hill, his bayonet held out before him, his eyes staring as though mesmerized. He had spotted the sergeant and was making straight for the gun, advancing slowly, deliberately, relentlessly. He got so close the sergeant could smell the garlic in his hot breath. He drew back his bayonet preparatory to plunging it in the machine gunner's body, but the sergeant, who had kept a few cartridges for the end, with some rapid turns of the wheel, elevated his gun, aimed point blank at his adver-

sary, and pressed the thumb piece. The last bullets the belt contained followed one another in a final burst. For the space of a second nothing happened; then with a look of inquisitive surprise, the Turk suddenly crumpled up, his arms shot forward over the gun, and his rifle fell with a clatter on the stones. The center of the cone of fire had caught him in the throat, severing his head from his body; the blood from the headless trunk poured in a red stream over the sergeant's khaki tunic as he sat on at his gun transfixed. In the meantime our infantry had rallied and were manning the line again. Reinforcements were hurrying up from Biddu, but when they arrived they were not required; the line had wavered under the terrific onslaughts of the enemy but had not broken; the key to Jerusalem was still in British hands.

When darkness came our little garrison buried over five hundred dead Turks on the slopes of Nebi Samwil.

Within easy reach of Nebi Samwil is the traditional site of Emmaus. A wonderful old monastery, used by us as an advanced dressing station, marks the place; so that our men were actually dying on the spot where Christ appeared to His disciples after the Crucifixion!

All stretcher cases had to be carried over rocky ground up and down the steep mountainsides for some miles before the shelter of the monastery could be reached and proper medical attention obtained. I walked over in the late afternoon, during a lull that had followed the fighting, to visit one of my company who had been mortally wounded.

I found him in a cot in a special corner of the monastery set aside for the more serious cases. He lay in his grey flannel army shirt; his uniform had been taken away—he would never require that again.

He tried to smile when he saw me—a pathetic attempt. Poor boy! he was little more than a youngster, and yet he had been with us ever since we landed in France. I should say he was about nineteen; he had undoubtedly put his age up to get into the army at all. I could imagine the enthusiasm that had caused him to add at least three years so that he might pass the easy-going recruiting officer.

I recalled his cheery face on a hundred marches, his witty jokes that had so often set the company in a roar. He was a general favourite with the men, and all of us would miss him. He possessed such a happy, sunny nature that

somehow I never associated him with death: and yet he was going to die, and very shortly, in a strange, foreign land thousands of miles from home. He was no longer capable of forming a cog in that great military machine that was crushing out human lives at every turn, and so had been thrown aside.

I guessed he must be feeling pretty lonely and badly in need of his mother, to whom he had probably gone in the past with every ache and pain, sure of sympathy. He had been a soldier for three years, but now he was just a little boy again, badly hurt and frightened—and terribly afraid to die.

His mother would have understood those unshed tears he was too proud to let fall. Had *she* been there, she would, I knew, have taken his aching head and laid it on her breast, and stroked his hair and comforted him, letting him sob his overweighted heart out, and thus have given him the relief he so sorely needed. But *I* was his officer, and to an enormous extent, officers and men must always remain strangers. It is a rule of the service, the very essence of discipline. What a curious little cramped world it is, this pipe-clay world of the army, the sacred traditions of which must not be tampered with even in the presence

of death! To the boy who lay there in pain and such need of sympathy and understanding, I was "his officer," a being of another world with wonderful unlimited powers, whose orders must be received with respect and instantly obeyed.

It was hardly to be expected that an officer would listen whilst a common soldier boy, in rough unpolished language, poured out all the doubts and half-formed fears that were perplexing him.

On the other hand, how could I say, as God knows I wanted to!—"Just have a good cry, old chap; hang the world and what others may think. I've got a mother at home, too, who would break her heart if anything happened to me—so I know, old boy, I understand!"

Instead I drew an empty ammunition box towards the bed and sat down, and because I thought it might interest him, I told him the story of Emmaus: Of how Christ had appeared to His disciples upon that very spot after the Crucifixion, just as night was coming on, and how, as He was about to go, one of them had entreated Him saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent"; and how He had remained for awhile, and broken bread and blessed it, and given it to them, and

said, "I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world!"

Just as I finished speaking a ray from the setting sun stole in at the mullioned window and fell across the bed, lighting up the dying soldier's face. The strained, worried look had vanished; a peaceful, almost happy and contented expression had taken its place. His hand crept slowly from the side of the bed. I took it in both of mine. He whispered, but although his voice was very low, I heard every word he said:

"Thank you for telling me that story, sir. 'Abide with me, fast falls the eventide' is mother's favourite hymn. I shall be able to sleep now. Good-night, sir." And then, lower still, he murmured, "God bless you!"

Poor little boy, he thought it might not be correct to say "God bless you" to an officer, even on the verge of the Great Beyond.

The setting of the sun had caused it to become colder. I pulled up the outer covering of the bed and tiptoed along the stone passage out onto the open hillside. As I turned in the direction of the track to Nebi Samwil the sky was suddenly lit with angry bursts of flame; there was a rumble of heavy guns, the spiteful sound of bullets, the deadly rapping noise made by machine guns.

I clenched my hands in impotent rage. It was terrible, this carnage that was robbing the world of the flower of its youth and the strength of its manhood! What were romance and chivalry, adventure and glory worth, that could outbalance the young lives offered in such profusion on its altars?

These thoughts had come to me often in France. They came less frequently in Macedonia and seldom in Palestine, but always at the back of my mind was a terrible doubt that refused to be put aside. War was futile, unnecessary and indefensible; it was cruel and relentless—the one relic of a barbarous past that modern civilization still clung to, seeing in the clash of arms the only solution of the great world problems of the present day.

* * * * * * *

When the sun rose next morning over the Judean hills, there was already an empty cot at Emmaus waiting for its next occupant, whilst a slender boyish form wrapped in an army blanket, lay with others on a long oak table in a room that had once been the library of the venerable prior but was now used as a mortuary.

CHAPTER X.

The Fight for the Holy City.

The 60th Division was relieved by the 74th in the Nebi Samwil area on December 5th. I marched my machine gun company along a winding mountain path to the neighbourhood of Beit Nakula, a small village about one mile east of Kuryet el Enab on the Jaffa-Jerusalem road. The weather now definitely broke up and it began to rain incessantly. For months past we had prayed for the sight of a cloud in the sky, however small, to veil for a time the blistering rays of the sun, but when the clouds came they were so numerous and so black they covered the sky and turned day into night.

The temperature suddenly dropped and it became bitterly cold. An icy wind lashed into fury the falling sheets of water, sweeping them into our faces as we fought our way along, just as the hot winds of the khamseen had driven the sands of the Desert and so delayed our progress across the peninsula of Sinai.

Roads and footpaths, previously inches deep in chalky dust, now became endless quagmires in

which men and animals floundered hopelessly. All our surplus kit, including great coats, had been left behind on the divisional dump at Shellal before the march to Beersheba. It was a tremendous and much-appreciated relief then to cast aside our extra clothing, the sun blazed in the sky and hundreds of miles of desert lay before us; indeed, it would have been well-nigh impossible to march and fight as we had marched and fought weighted down with full equipment.

But now, when the penetrating rain forced its way through our thin cotton tunics and cold blasts of wind whistled round our numbed bare knees, turning them from sunburnt brown to mottled blue, we were reminded of the comfort of trousers, and great coats seemed most desirable adjuncts to our wardrobes.

Our boots, too, were in a deplorable condition due to constant marching over rocky ground. Fresh supplies were reported on the way from rail head, but so far had failed to reach us. Some of my men were practically barefooted. However, rough sandals, similar to those worn by the Turks, made from odd pieces of leather picked up in the transport lines, and bound to the feet by strips of hide or even string, proved excellent substitutes for the genuine article.

The heavy rains, which were causing us such discomfort in the hills, played havoc with our lines of communication, and at a time when a good service between the base and the firing line was of the utmost importance.

A few hours had changed the Wadi Ghuzze from a peaceful parched valley to a raging tempestuous torrent.

Our military bridges over which supplies came were constantly swept away by the rising stream, and all traffic was held up until the engineers could reconstruct them.

Our camels, if painfully slow, had yet been a thoroughly reliable means of transporting food and ammunition whilst the fine weather lasted; they became almost useless when the wet weather came. In fact, they proved an added source of danger to our advancing troops. Slipping in the mud, breaking their legs and obstructing the traffic in other ways, they sometimes caused congestion it took hours to remove.

Three infantry divisions with artillery, and the Australian mounted troops, were being fed along the Jaffa-Jerusalem road; consequently, any disorganisation of the supply train at once became a serious matter. Many camels, from sheer misery, barracked in the mud and refused

to rise again. They usually chose for this purpose a narrow road, on one side of which was a steep cliff, on the other a precipice. Every effort was made to induce them to continue on their way, but when persuasion failed the only alternative was to shoot them and roll their dead bodies over into the valley below. They were quickly seized upon by watchful natives, cut up into convenient joints and conveyed to tiny mud houses on the tops of cone-shaped hills. They, no doubt, afforded excellent dinners to numerous Palestinian families.

My camp at Beit Nakula consisted of a series of terraces, each one about thirty yards in width; the gun stores being stacked up on a level patch of ground by the side of the road and placed under a guard. On the first terrace were the officers' bivouacs, on those below the various gun teams were encamped. Immediately after arrival a working party commenced getting the place in order, whilst the remainder erected bivouacs and dug trenches to drain the waterlogged ground. We were all soaked to the skin and welcomed the digging as a means of restoring circulation. The cooks had great difficulty in starting a fire, but willing hands rolled rocks together as a protection from the driving rain,

and soon the sight of flames and the sound of crackling wood gave cheerful promise of hot tea in the near future.

When everything was going smoothly I went over to my transport lines to inspect the condition of the mules. I must confess they were causing me considerable anxiety. Rations had been bad for some time owing to the breakdown of the bridges and consequent disorganisation. Lack of water had been our principal difficulty in the past, but now that water was plentiful—indeed too plentiful—fodder had become scarce. Bulk foods, such as hay and tibbin, were almost unobtainable, and I had to make do with half rations of corn and barley.

The work required from a machine gun pack mule is very arduous. Our move from Nebi Samwil indicated that fresh operations were about to take place. Even greater efforts would be required then and there was no doubt they had lost weight to an alarming extent and were hardly in a fit condition for the big struggle I felt sure was impending.

As I turned these rather perplexing problems over in my mind, a brigade runner came up, saluted, and said, "The general's compliments, sir, and will you be on the road opposite your

camp, mounted, in five minutes' time? He wishes you to accompany him to Kustul."

Now Kustul was our most advanced post towards Jerusalem. It looked as though a reconnaissance was taking place. Perhaps the great attack for which we had all been anxiously waiting was about to be launched! The very thought of it made me feel warm all over.

I ordered my horse saddled up again. Poor old Peter! he looked very depressed when his half-filled nose bag was removed. I mounted and trotted to the side of the road. A few minutes later Brigadier-General Watson accompanied by the four battalion commanders of the 180th Brigade came along, and we all turned east towards Kustul. As I passed some of my men digging trenches I overheard one of them say to his companions, "There goes the capting; there'll be dirty work at the crossroads to-night, boys!"

I rode with the colonel of the 20th London Regiment. Colonel Warde-Aldham was a guardsman, a captain in his own regiment at the commencement of the war, but quickly picked out to command a territorial battalion in the new armies. When he first joined us he was not very popular; his guard's training and love of disci-

pline did not endear him to either officers or men. He had a perfect mania for parades, shiny buttons and infantry drill, and took a peculiar and personal interest in the training and progress of his junior officers. However, when the fighting came along, the tide of popular approval quickly turned in his favour. His bravery in action and knowledge of practical tactics caused him to become one of the most popular, just as he was one of the most efficient, officers in the division.

We machine gunners had a particularly warm corner in our hearts for the little colonel of the 20th, not only because he understood machine gun methods so thoroughly, but also because he invariably looked after that section of ours which happened to be attached to his battalion for operations.

I knew he must have had a talk with the general before leaving brigade headquarters, so I asked him if anything particular was in the wind. He smiled in that curious secretive way he had, and bending over his horse towards me, said:

"Why, yes, Gilbert, if all goes well in three days' time Jerusalem will be in our hands. Our brigade, with the 179th on our right and the 181st in reserve, is to be in position on the night

of the seventh. The 179th Brigade will then cross the Wadi Surar and make for the high ground south of Ain Karim.

"We attack at dawn on the eighth from the valley before Kustul, advance up the hills and take the Deir Yesin fortifications from the front. The 53rd Division is advancing up the Hebron road and will enter Jerusalem from the south.

"Meanwhile the 74th and 10th Divisions, pivoting on Nebi Samwil, are prepared immediately the city is clear of the enemy to swing forward and form a line facing north. The Turks are expected to retreat either north on Nablus or east to the Jordan Valley. By the way, I believe I am to have one of your sections with me, which will you send?"

"Number four, Colonel," I replied.

"Good, I like Lamb," said the commanding officer of the 20th, and we both cantered on to rejoin the brigadier who had gone some way ahead.

The rain had ceased for a time, and a watery gleam of pale sunshine stole over the barren hills and valleys through which we were now passing. Soon we got to the neighbourhood of Kustul. All horses were left in the dip, and we climbed the steep hill on which the tiny village

of Kustul stands like a beacon. Not more than two officers were allowed to observe from the rocks on the forward slope at one time as it was under direct observation from Turkish trenches.

When my turn came I wormed my way between two huge boulders, and with my map-case before me, studied the ground carefully.

Below me the mountainside fell away in a series of steep, narrow terraces until the valley was reached; here a plentiful supply of almond trees promised a certain amount of cover from view, provided we were able to reach them before daylight came. The hills we were to storm afterwards, however, stood out clearly in all the nakedness of their barren state. The trenches of Deir Yesin, resembling giant wounds but partly healed, showed thin white streaks a little below the crests of the tallest heights.

I thought to myself: It will require all our strength and determination to scale those rugged hills under fire from the cleverly sighted Turkish trenches and machine gun emplacements of the enemy. Even the minutest amount of cover will be unobtainable during the long climb necessary, and we shall certainly be worn out with dragging ourselves and our guns up the steep terraces of rock before the final assault takes place.

And then I began to plan the most effective way in which I might assist the attack with my sixteen guns. My allowance of time seemed all too short before two blasts on the brigadier's whistle recalled me to the reverse slope.

A brigade conference was held in the hollow at which the following plan of action was agreed to: The 2nd/18th was to advance along the Jaffa-Jerusalem road, under cover of darkness, with the village of Lifta as its objective, whilst the 2nd/20th, supported by the 2nd/19th, was to assemble in the valley below Deir Yesin, reorganise there, and attack the heights before dawn on December 8th. The 2nd/17th, the remaining battalion in the brigade, would be in reserve, ready to follow up the 2nd/18th should the initial operation prove successful. I attached one section of guns to each assaulting battalion, keeping one in reserve.

* * * * * * *

The evening of December 7th was pitch black; there was no moon; it was bitterly cold and rain fell in torrents. From an early hour in the afternoon troops commenced arriving in small parties at the place of assembly in the wadi behind Kustul. On every road and track endless lines of

guns and wagons, loaded with supplies, moved towards the front. Field ambulances were feverishly being erected in any sheltered place available, whilst overhead the ceaseless drone of aeroplanes told us the eyes of the army were watching for us.

Staff officers, covered in mud, galloped from divisional to brigade and back to corps headquarters. A camp of military police by the side of the Jaffa road roused my curiosity. I asked the officer in charge what they were doing there. He replied, "We are waiting to be used to police the streets of Jerusalem after it has been captured!"

I went back to my company headquarters, wrote out my final operation orders, despatched them by runners to the sections, lay down on the wet ground and was soon fast asleep.

At 1 A. M. the first company of the 2nd/20th went over the top and commenced to descend the precipitous slopes leading to the valley below Deir Yesin. They were followed by Lieutenant Lamb's section, complete with gun and ammunition mules. I got permission from the brigadier to go into action with them as I very much wished to be present at the opening of the show. I promised I would return to brigade headquarters later.

I am confident no animal in the world but a mule could have survived that awful climb down the steep terraces, loaded as my mules were loaded, with heavy guns and boxes filled with ammunition.

The slipperiness caused by the rain made the descent a thousand times more difficult. Again and again both man and beast would slide over the treacherous ground. Sometimes a mule turned a complete summersault and landed on his back. Loads were constantly cast, only to be collected again in the inky darkness, and with numbed fingers, repacked on the pack saddle. Our training in the Macedonian hills stood us in good stead now; our mules, too, by this time were thoroughly trained and knew what was required of them.

It had been our intention to rush the defences of Deir Yesin under cover of darkness, but the difficulties in the way had been underestimated, and when dawn broke it found us still far from our objective. Immediately the increasing daylight disclosed our presence in the valley, the enemy's heavy artillery opened up, and soon shells were falling amongst the trees under which our various companies were organising for the attack.

The brigadier applied for artillery support, so that guns on both sides joined in hurling shells that crashed and exploded with deafening reports on the rocky sides of the two hills. I realised that, even when captured, Deir Yesin would require a considerable amount of holding, and decided to take my reserve section with the attacking infantry to consolidate.

Like ants men climbed from terrace to terrace, only stopping to fire, getting higher and higher, and always in full view of the enemy who took full advantage of the splendid targets offered.

In some places the terraces were so steep men climbed on each other's shoulders, dragging companions after them. Half-way up the hill further progress with the mules was impossible, so I ordered the guns unloaded and manhandled for the remainder of the way.

Two of my wounded mules I shot with my revolver. Poor beasts! they had worked so hard with so little food to sustain them, I could not bear to think they should lie out on the hillside to die by inches.

The last few hundred yards the infantry rushed with the bayonet. Brave as the Turks were, and I do not believe there are braver soldiers, they were unable to withstand this final

assault, and by 7 A. M. the defences of the formidable ridge overhanging the Wadi Surar were captured. My machine guns were soon mounted in and around Deir Yesin, some being placed on the flat roofs of the houses, others firing through windows. Hostile machine guns were still sweeping the steep slopes leading to the village of Lifta, but I was lucky enough to put two of them out of action with my searching fire.

A magnificent bayonet charge by the 2nd/17th Londoners, who had been in support, but had now taken the place of the 2nd/18th, completed the Turkish defeat, and Lifta was occupied at dusk.

A thrilling and unforgettable incident occurred after the capture of the ridge. On looking back over the way we had come, I saw a complete battery of field guns dash down the open Jaffa road, past Kulonie in the valley, and up the steep incline leading to Lifta. Harness and steel work rattled. The hoofs of the galloping horses rang on the road, the heavy wheels of the gun carriages rumbled like an approaching thunderstorm. Each gun was perfectly spaced and covered off. The officer in command of the battery rode in front, and the whole scene reminded me of an exhibition at the naval and

military tournament in London before the war.

The only added attraction, if one might call it so, was the picturesqueness of the bursting shells of the infuriated Turkish gunners; but luckily these fell on either side of the road, the whole stretch of which was under direct observation of the enemy.

It seemed a suicidal thing to do, to gallop a battery over such a shell-swept area instead of waiting until the Turks were dislodged by us from the higher ground beyond Deir Yesin, but the most wonderful luck accompanied the exploit and not a man or horse was hit.

Soon the field guns were in position and firing over open sights at the temporarily disorganised Turkish force. All objectives had now been gained, our hopes of success more than realised. Picquets and sentries were posted and my guns laid on night lines as a precautionary measure. It was not anticipated, however, that the enemy would attempt a counter-attack just yet—he had been too severely handled for that.

We knew the advance on Jerusalem was to be a kind of encircling movement to avoid injury to the holy places. General Allenby had issued the strictest orders that no fighting of any kind was to take place in the Holy City itself; and it

is rather interesting to know that throughout the whole Palestine campaign, not a shot was fired by the British in Jerusalem, nor in any city or village held sacred by the three greatest religions in the world.

Allenby's strategy forced the Turk to carry out his defensive fighting for Jerusalem on the hills some distance from the city, and by leaving him a way of retreat, any damage that might have been caused was avoided.

Before returning to brigade headquarters I went round the outpost line accompanied by the section officer on duty. The rain was falling still, but not so heavily now. All was strangely quiet after the recent din of battle.

Our tired and mud-stained army, save for those whose duty it was to watch, was sleeping. It took me a considerable time to visit all the gun teams and emplacements and I was just bidding good-night to my section commander, when clearly borne on the night air came the sound of a clock striking the hour of midnight.

We both stood and listened until the vibration of the last stroke had died away, thrilled by the fact, brought home to us so vividly, of the nearness of Jerusalem. I glanced at my luminous wrist watch and noticed it was a few minutes fast.

My companion said good-bye and returned to his guns, but I stood where I was for awhile and tried to penetrate the sable cloak of night that lay between me and the city of my dreams.

All around me lay the soldiers of the last crusade, resting, waiting for tomorrow's dawn. Jerusalem, the sacred city of the world, was so near that one could hear the clocks striking; and, if one remained very still, one could almost imagine he could feel her heart beating too. In a few hours we should be marching forward to free her after four centuries of Turkish misrule and oppression. How totally inadequate are words to tell of such an adventure as this!

As I turned in the direction of my bivouac, my attention was attracted by a young infantry officer striking a match to light his cigarette. The flame, shielded by his hands, illuminated his whole face, throwing into bold relief his prominent features framed in the surrounding darkness. A strange thought came to me. It may have been the effect of the shadows caused by the lighted match, or some trick of my over-excited imagination—but the peak of his khaki helmet looked exactly like a raised visor, whilst the face was the face of some armoured knight of old which I could not help thinking I had seen

years before, perhaps in some painting in a gallery or book in the library at home. Somewhere in the past, that bold forehead, aquiline nose, firm chin, and those steadfast, unfathomable eyes, had impressed themselves on my memory.

The match went out and all was dark again.

I crept under the flap of my bivouac, turned over on my side and waited for sleep to come—but in vain. I heard each hour throughout the night recorded on the clock in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XI.

The Surrender of Jerusalem.

The second in command of one of the London regiments in my brigade had a really brilliant idea. It came to him about 4 A. M. on December 9th, as he lay in his bivouac constructed from two army blankets and three Turkish rifles.

The ground beneath him was wet, and the raw night air, heavy with mist and penetratingly cold, crept through the openings of his temporary shelter, chilling him to the bone. He had tossed from side to side in his valise the greater part of the night to avoid the mist, which, liquefying into drops of rain on the inner surface of the bivouac, dropped with depressing regularity on his upturned face.

Although ravenously hungry, he was not looking forward to breakfast. But then, for some time past, the daily menu had consisted of bully beef and biscuits, and whilst American canned beef is awfully good, you get rather tired of it if you have nothing else to eat for a year or two. The major, unfortunately, was blessed with a vivid imagination and could picture such

wonderful breakfasts; for instance—Quaker oats and thick cream, ham and eggs, devilled kidneys and mushrooms, grilled Dover sole, dry toast, marmalade and coffee! One thing he had firmly decided, he would apply for leave to Cairo immediately after the next big show.

Going down the line would be pretty beastly, but thank goodness, trains were now running across the Desert, and at Kantara he could change on to the Egyptian state railway; and then the tremendous satisfaction of sitting at a real table once more in the cheerful dining-room at Shepherd's Hotel!

In imagination he could see that table now, with its spotless linen cloth, shining silver, and large bowl of fragrant roses. What should he order first? Perhaps coffee, toast, eggs and bacon, lots of eggs and lots of curly, crisp rolls of bacon. When these arrived he would wait for a moment whilst the man removed the cover of the *entree* dish, and then indulge in a surreptitious but appreciative sniff at the contents. (Is there anything in the world more likely to stimulate appetite and soothe the savage beast latent in all of us than the aroma of cooked bacon and freshly roasted coffee?)

Then he would prop his folded newspaper

against the coffee pot and read how those poor devils in Palestine were getting on!

The major was on the point of raising a particularly choice morsel of dream bacon to his mouth, when a large drop of dirty water fell from the old army blanket overhead, splashed on his nose, and caused the whole delightful picture to fade away.

It was at this moment that the Lifta cock crew and the great idea came!

Lifta had fallen into British hands the night before and the inhabitants, who were quite friendly, had not been dispossessed. A cordon of troops was thrown around the village, however, as a precautionary measure. If there was a cockerel in Lifta, there were probably hens, too. If hens—why not eggs? The quartermaster most likely possessed a secret store of bacon; quartermasters usually do. Eggs and bacon!—part of the major's dream might yet be realised.

His mouth watered in anticipation and then another thought came, a disturbing one this time! Hundreds of officers and thousands of men were in the immediate vicinity of the captured village. Just suppose only a small percentage of these should have heard the cock

crow—and a still smaller have had the same idea as himself? Why, in less than an hour's time there would not be a solitary egg, or for the matter of that, a hen left in the place.

Not a moment was to be lost! Where was his man?

"Hey, Barton!" shouted the major, now thoroughly alive to the urgency of the occasion. "Barton, where are you?"

"Here, sir!" replied a very sleepy voice, and an indistinct form crawled out of a bivouac a few yards away.

"Oh, Barton, wake the officers' cook, tell him to get his rifle and report to me immediately."

"Very good, sir," said Barton, and he went in the direction of the cook-house.

Shortly afterwards Private Murch, culinary expert, stood before the major's bivouac. He hardly gave the impression of a smart British soldier; his tunic was so covered with grease and filth it looked black instead of khaki colour. He had omitted to rewind his puttees, slackened to sleep in, and they hung in forlorn loops round his calves. The toe-cap of one boot was missing, exposing to view a very red big toe, framed in a ragged grey woollen sock. He probably used his pith helmet as a pillow, for it had lost its

original shape and had a twisted and drunken appearance; it was at least one size too small, and was only held in position by a thick piece of string doing duty for the leather strap it must have once possessed.

Private Murch had not shaved recently and a heavy stubble covered his chin, giving to his face rather a villainous expression quite out of keeping with the man's naturally sunny disposition. Slung over his right shoulder was a rifle, protruding from the muzzle of which peeped a screwed-up piece of oily rag.

The major flashed his electric torch on this miserable specimen of humanity, and his first thought was, "Really, the fellow is impossible; how do cooks get in such a state? He ought to be well told off." Then he remembered the eggs and how little time there was to lose, so all he said was, "Take that rag out of your rifle and listen to me. You know the village we captured last night?—it is called Lifta and is about a mile east of here. I want you to go there right away and buy some eggs, as many as possible; get them from the villagers. Here are sixty piastres, be as quick as possible, but *don't* come back without the eggs!"

Private Murch saluted as smartly as he knew

how—being a cook he was a little out of practice. He then turned about and was almost immediately swallowed up in the mist.

To understand something of the character of a typical army cook, it is necessary to know how it is a soldier comes to be selected for this responsible post on active service.

When a cook is required at battalion headquarters to replace another who has either become a casualty, which is very rare, or, more frequently, gone sick from his own cooking, the adjutant sends a chit to all company commanders, worded as follows:

To O.C., A. B. C. and D. Coy's

A cook is required for B'n H.Q. You will detail a suitable man to report to the Orderly Room at 09.30 hr's, to-morrow the Nth inst.

A. Blank, Capt. and Adj.

When the officer commanding "A" Company gets this note he parades all his men and carries out a careful inspection. Unfortunately, in most infantry companies there are certain to be two or three scalawags who invariably let the company down when it is inspected by the colonel or any visiting general. The captain pays particular attention to these bad men of

his company; finally he decides Private X is the biggest handicap his company at present possesses, so he says to Private X: "You will report, with full equipment, at battalion headquarters at nine-thirty to-morrow morning!" And this duty over, he dismisses his company.

The same procedure takes place in B, C, and D Companies, so that at nine-thirty the next morning, four of the dirtiest, most disreputable, bad characters in the whole battalion parade before the adjutant for the position of cook.

The adjutant comes out of his tent, has a good look at them, finally decides Private Y is the least objectionable and says to him: "Have you ever had any experience of cooking?"

"No, sir!" replies Private Y.

"How would you like to be officers' cook?" continues the adjutant.

"Not at all, sir," says Private Y.

"You will report at 10 o'clock to the mess sergeant as cook," raps out the adjutant, who prefers to take the man's lack of enthusiasm as the sign of a modest nature and a natural feeling of unworthiness for the promotion to the staff; and he dismisses the other three men.

From which it will be gathered staff appointments do not necessarily go to the most suitable

or efficient people; indeed many staff officers are selected for important posts in a manner similar to the selection of army cooks.

* * * * * * *

Private Murch grumbled gently to himself as he set off in the direction of Lifta.

It was still quite dark, there was a heavy ground mist, and his way lay over country cut up by trenches and strewn with boulders. He trudged along for some time, now and then giving his unprotected toes nasty knocks against the sharp flints.

In Bible times the favourite way of killing a man was to stone him to death. Murch had always considered this rather a clumsy method, but out here in Palestine—why, it appeared the most natural thing in the world. Stones lay everywhere, ready to the hand, nasty jagged stones. What could be easier than to pick up some and hurl them at anyone one didn't particularly care about? Should the exertion of stooping be too great, there were always nice heaps of the right size collected from cultivated strips of land, and these were always within reach.

It was impossible to keep in an absolutely straight line. Some of the deserted Turkish

trenches were too wide to cross, and this necessitated a *detour* of some hundreds of yards before he could get ahead; but he always managed to pick up the same direction again, of that he was certain.

The major said Lifta was only a mile away, but Private Murch was not going to be taken in by that; he knew from bitter experience what an "officer's mile" represented on the ground.

How many times, towards the end of a long march, when his feet were blistered, and his whole body aching from sheer fatigue, would an officer ride along the ranks of dusty, discouraged men, and say cheerfully, "Keep it up! only another mile to go." The mile invariably turned out to be two, or even three, so that when he heard that old refrain again, "Only another mile," he smiled grimly to himself, set his teeth, and absolutely disbelieved it. Anyhow, this was the longest "officer's mile" Private Murch had yet experienced. Luckily it was getting lighter every minute. He could not help thinking it strange he had not passed any of the men he knew were on duty round Lifta.

And then, just as he was beginning to get really alarmed, he came to the crest of a hill, and there before him lay the village he had been

looking for. The sun was now peeping behind the horizon, throwing into relief the houses, temples and mosques crowded together. The major had described it as a small village, but it was an enormous place, and certainly the finest he had come across since leaving Cairo. One thing was sure, he would get all the eggs he needed here.

In the meantime he was both hot and tired. He sat down on a large stone and mopped his face with the oily rag he had removed from the muzzle of his rifle and placed in his pocket before leaving camp; then, removing the cigarette stump from behind his ear, he lit it and took one or two satisfying puffs before casting it aside and taking a further look at the surrounding country.

A few yards to his left ran a winding road, broad and smooth leading right up to the village. Just his luck! he might have walked on level ground in comfort instead of scrambling over jagged rocks and in and out of trenches "like a bloomin' monkey." Why couldn't the major have told him of this short cut, instead of directing him right across the hills?

"'Ello! What was that?"

The end of the road, previously deserted, was

now covered by a large crowd advancing from the shelter of the houses. It was still some distance away, but a carriage drawn by a pair of horses could be seen leading the procession. As it got nearer two men on horseback could be distinguished carrying white banners on long poles and riding a little in rear of the dilapidated vehicle.

Murch got up and strolled towards them. He was quite mystified as to the meaning of this strange performance. He could see that many of the people, there were women and children amongst them, carried white flags and handkerchiefs, and these they continually waved before them; perhaps it was a native funeral, thought the army cook.

At length they espied him, and, with loud cries and clapping of hands, crowded round, all talking at once.

They were in a wild state of excitement, and for a moment, Private Murch thought of flight. Then he decided he would hold his ground; after all, he was a British soldier, whereas these villagers were only a lot of "blawsted natives"; there was nothing to fear.

His arms were seized and frantically pulled up and down; he was patted all over, and almost

deafened with piercing shrieks of joy uttered by the women. They seemed particularly pleased with his uniform and general appearance, and the greatest interest was shown in his brass buttons and his rifle.

In spite of these rather embarrassing attentions, he could not help feeling highly gratified with the obvious admiration he was causing. It was the first time since he had been a soldier that his "turn out" had excited any marks of approval from anyone. That this should happen at a time when he honestly felt he was not looking his best, was truly remarkable.

At the height of all this excitement, a coloured gentleman in a white night shirt shouted loudly, "Allah Akbar," and seizing the cook in both arms endeavoured to kiss him. Our hero was luckily able to frustrate this design by wrenching one arm free and assuming a threatening attitude, but only just in time.

The noise now died down, and a little man in a black frock coat with a tarbush on his head and looking very much like a Turk, could be heard speaking from the carriage.

"You are British soldier, are not you?" he asked in a high falsetto voice.

"I should say so," replied Private Murch.

"Where is General Allah Nebi?" now enquired the man in the red fez.

"'Anged if I know, mister," answered the private.

"I want to surrender the city please. 'Ere are ze keys; it is yours!" went on the stranger, producing a large bunch of keys and waving them before the bewildered Britisher, who now began to think he had fallen amongst lunatics.

"I don't want yer city. I want some heggs for my hofficers!" yelled the disgusted cook.

* * * * * * *

Whilst all these things were happening the major was awaiting anxiously the return of the cook with his breakfast. The other officers also were beginning to feel hungry; as for the colonel, he made a few caustic remarks with reference to brilliant ideas in general and sent for his own servant to take the cook's place.

I happened to be at battalion headquarters when Private Murch, hot and out of breath, arrived.

"Where have you been for the last four hours?" demanded the colonel in a freezing tone.

The perspiring private proceeded to relate his amazing adventures in a rich cockney dialect.

In spite of his rambling and at times inco-

herent recitation, it dawned on us at last that one of the greatest events in the history of the world, for which thousands had given their lives and for which millions of pounds of English money had been poured out, had just taken place.

When the man came to the end of his story, the colonel turned to us and said quietly, "Gentlemen, Jerusalem has fallen!"

Then he seized a field telephone, rang up the brigadier, and acquainted him with the startling news.

Brigadier-General Watson was wildly excited —he was the nearest general to the Holy City and to him would fall the honour of accepting the surrender: his name would be flashed to every corner of the globe.

"Where's my horse?" he shouted. "Saddle him up immediately and tell the groom to follow me," and he hurried to his tent for his best red cap and fly whisk.

In a few minutes he was galloping madly up the Jaffa-Jerusalem road followed by an orderly on a mule.

He met the mayor in his carriage outside the Jaffa Gate. The road was now black with people, for everyone in the city was at last aware the Turks had left for good.

Together the mayor of Jerusalem and the English brigadier rode through the streets of Jerusalem until they came to the El Kala citadel. On the steps at the base of the Tower of David the mayor surrendered the Holy City and handed over the keys. General Watson accepted in the name of the Allies, and was loudly cheered by the inhabitants as he rode back to brigade headquarters.

In the meantime, however, directly the brigadier had left the British lines, the brigade major rang up the divisional commander and informed him of what was taking place. Major-General Shea got on the field telephone and said, "Stop the brigadier, I will *myself* take the surrender of Jerusalem!"

It was, of course, too late to stop the brigadier then: he was already in Jerusalem. So when he got back, flushed with success, the brigade major told him what the divisional general had said. Brigadier-General Watson decided the only thing to do was to ride back to the city and hand the keys back to the mayor, who was informed that Major-General Shea was now on his way to see him.

Fresh cheering in the streets announced the ceremonial arrival of the divisional commander

in his car, accompanied by a glittering staff. The mayor came out, made another little speech, surrendered Jerusalem again, and handed over the keys which had been handed back to him a short time before by the brigadier. Major-General Shea made a tactful speech that was loudly cheered by the crowds in the streets; and then, amidst the clapping of hands and welcoming cries of the populace motored back to his headquarters on the Mount of Grapes.

His first duty on returning was to send a telegram to the commander-in-chief, through the 20th Corps, worded as follows:

"I have the honor to report that I have this day accepted the surrender of Jerusalem."

By return came the message:

"General Allenby will himself accept the surrender of Jerusalem on the 11th inst.; make all arrangements."

On December 11th General Allenby, followed by representatives of the Allies, made his formal entry into Jerusalem.

The historic Jaffa Gate was opened after years of disuse enabling him to pass into the Holy City without making use of the gap in the wall through which the kaiser entered in 1898.

Allenby entered on foot and left on foot, and throughout the ceremony no Allied flag was flown, whilst naturally no enemy flags were visible. The mayor came out on to the steps of the Tower of David, surrendered the city and handed over to the commander-in-chief the keys which had been returned to him by the divisional general the previous afternoon.

General Allenby issued a proclamation, read in English, French, Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, Russian and Italian, in which he said that order would be maintained in all the hallowed sites of the three great religions, which were to be guarded and preserved for the free use of worshippers.

The chief notables who had remained in Jerusalem, were then presented to the general who returned on foot to the Jaffa Gate, frantically cheered by the multitude, where his car was waiting to take him back to army headquarters at Ramleh.

Two weeks afterwards the mayor of Jerusalem died of pneumonia. I could not help thinking he must have caught cold standing exposed to the inclement weather whilst he handed over Jerusalem, first to the cook, then to the brigadier, then to the major-general and finally to the commander-in-chief.

CHAPTER XII.

When Prophecies Come True.

At last Jerusalem was in our hands!

In all the ten crusades organised and equipped to free the Holy City, only two were really successful,—the first led by Godfrey de Bouillon, and the last under Edmund Allenby.

I received orders at 11 o'clock December 9th to march my company through the city and take up positions with the infantry at Shafat and Tel el Ful astride the Nablus road. It was unlikely so rich a prize as Jerusalem would be given up without a further effort by the enemy. The Turks were still holding much of the high ground both north and east of the city; consequently we had to reorganise rapidly and be prepared for a determined counter-attack.

I assembled my company on the Jaffa road facing the hills we had recently fought over. The sergeant-major called the roll; when he came to a name and there was no response, he drew his pencil through it. We had suffered heavy casualties, but that was only to be expected with the kind of fighting we had experienced.

My company was growing pathetically small. Reinforcements had not reported for some time, owing to a breakdown of the railway bridge across the Wadi Ghuzze.

As each familiar face disappeared it was like the personal loss of a relative. These men had become so much a part of my life that I felt their loss keenly; and then, too, it was always the ones I could least afford who were taken, or so it seemed. But that was probably only my fancy—they were all such splendid fellows! I longed to tell them what I thought of them but it would not have done; and yet, I sometimes wondered if it would really impair the efficiency of our armies to infuse a little more humanity into the relationship of officer and man. We were dealing with a very different type to the "pressed man" or "mercenary" of olden days, and surely different men need different methods!

Because I feel this need of reform I am sure I should not prove a success as a regular officer in peace time; but as I have no intention of soldiering without a war to make it interesting, it really does not matter very much.

As I gave the order to march off, I could not help being struck by the difference in the appearance of my men now, and when they were

inspected by the divisional general before the attack on Beersheba.

Then, they were the last word in smartness, with their new drill tunics, shining brass buttons, pith helmets and shorts. Now, their uniforms were tattered, dirty and blood-stained; most of them had beards and had not enjoyed a real wash for weeks; many were wounded, and practically all had bandages round their bare knees where the rocks had cut them and produced septic sores. The torrential rains had reduced their smart pith helmets to shapeless pulp. Tramps would have thrown away as useless the boots my men were glad to wear. They were terribly thin and wretched looking; their cheek-bones stood out prominently; dark rings under their eyes were the legacies left by sleepless nights and countless privations.

As my column moved off, every man's head was *down*. They marched as men do who anticipate a tiring journey, with nothing to look forward to with pleasure, and nothing to look back on with regret. The wonderful fire of enthusiasm that had burned so brightly in each one of us, was now merely flickering, if it had not entirely burnt itself out.

The men seldom sang on the march these days,

and I missed their cheery choruses. I noticed they had given up the practice of passing harmless jests down the ranks as they marched at ease, and I was sorry for the omission.

I rode in advance of my company, and for a while the road was very uninteresting. Lifta, captured the previous evening, was a typical Palestinian village, all the houses huddled together on rising ground, some with dome-shaped roofs, others flat, but all white with the peculiar lime-mixed mud wash used both as a protection against the summer sun and winter rains.

Soon we reached the outskirts of the city and began passing the more modern Jewish buildings that lie outside the Jaffa Gate, and then at last we found ourselves inside the walls themselves—the first British troops to march through the Holy City!

The narrow streets were packed with townspeople, old men and women and children, all wild with delight and dressed in their best to greet the victorious army. They had no flags, so they hung bright coloured carpets and Eastern embroideries from the balconies of their little white houses.

The women had arms full of flowers which

they showered amongst the troops; whilst the children, calling out English words of welcome, ran forward and seized the soldiers' hands. Some of the older people kissed the guns and gun carriages, as covered with dust and mud they clattered over the cobblestones; for a battery of artillery, followed by two battalions of infantry, was close behind us.

Venerable Jewish rabbis, with long grey beards, knelt in the mud by the wayside and with tears coursing down their furrowed cheeks, blessed us.

Arabs in bright colours, mingled with Christians and Jews, and lent a vivid barbaric touch to the picture.

The indescribable smell of Jerusalem rose to meet us; a mixture of spices and sweet herbs, strange eastern cooking and dried fruits, camels and native garments, and open drains! I shall never forget it, for it is a very part and parcel of the place.

I recalled a quaint hymn I read many years ago. It was written by Saint Augustine, or founded on words of his, and was passed from mouth to mouth in the middle ages to encourage recruiting for the Crusades—

Thy walls are made of precious stones
Thy bulwarks diamonds square,
Thy gates are of bright Orient pearl
Exceeding rich and rare,
Thy turrets and thy pinnacles
With carbuncles do shine,
Thy very streets are paved with gold
Surpassing clear and fine,
Thy houses are of ivory
Thy windows crystal clear.
Thy tiles are made of beaten gold
Oh God, that I were there!

As I rode through Jerusalem the words were on my lips. I *was* there, in this wonderful city of which Saint Augustine had sung, sacred to the three religions which hate each other more undyingly than any other religions in the world!

Strange irony which has wrought such a beautiful city out of the love and hate of three creeds! Mosque, church, long-roofed convent, synagogue dome, jostling each other; all white and glistening with a show of peace in the clear light of mid-day.

I looked back along the line of my company, and now every man's head was *up*, their eyes were shining, their arms swung by their sides. They were marching as men march on parade for an inspection by the king!

People tell me soldiers have no souls. I refuse to believe it for I know what was in our thoughts that day. Certainly we experienced the thrill of those that make history. We were proud that Jerusalem after languishing for over four hundred years under the Turkish yoke should be free at last, that the prize for which we had undergone so many weary months of fighting should be ours. But, above all, we had a great and abiding faith in God, Whose mercy had granted us the victory; and we felt that, somehow, it was worth the privations, the heat, the thirst and the flies, the loss of comrades who had been more than brothers, the sad memory of lonely graves in Judean hills, the wounds and the weariness—to free the Holy Land forever, to bring peace and happiness to a people who had been oppressed too long!

There is a very interesting prophecy with regard to the capture of Jerusalem. It is an Arab saying and is over two hundred years old. It reads, "When the Nile flows into Palestine, then shall the prophet from the west drive the Turk from Jerusalem."

When this prophecy was made it must have seemed an utter impossibility that the waters of the River Nile should ever flow over two hundred miles of arid desert into Palestine.

But the pipe line we laid across the peninsula of Sinai brought the Nile water from Kantara; and just before the capture of Jerusalem, this water from Egypt was being pumped into Palestine, north of Gaza, at the rate of thousands of gallons a day. Fanatis were filled with it, placed on the backs of camels and taken up to the troops in the line fighting for Jerusalem.

Then, "the prophet," in Arabic is Al Nebi, and General Allenby was known as Al Nebi by practically the entire native population. So that this ancient prophecy was fulfilled to the letter; the waters of the Nile flowed into Palestine, and the prophet, Al Nebi, came from the west and drove the Turk from Jerusalem.

Chapter XII of the Book of Daniel says: "Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days."

The year 1335 of the Hegira is the year 1917 of the Christian era, the year in which Jerusalem was freed.

Nothing I think gave a clearer indication of England's intentions in Palestine than the order of the commander-in-chief that no British flag should fly over the conquered city, and no flag

was flown save the Red Cross flag, emblem of succour to the distressed, and this proud pennon flew from the American Hospital in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XIII.

Tactics of Saul.

The first things we bought after the capture of Jerusalem were Bibles and matches. We had recently received a welcome issue of army cigarettes from the base, but the army service corps forgot to send up matches.

We used the Bibles as guide books to Palestine, and remarkably fine ones they turned out to be! It was wonderfully interesting to read the history of all the places we were visiting daily, and men in the ranks were as keen as the officers. It was no uncommon sight to come across cockney soldiers out under the stars when they should have been sleeping, arguing about some incident in the Bible because of a place or event in the day's march that made the Biblical pages live again.

British soldiers on guard paced where the Israelite soldiers paced; we drank from Abraham's wells; we walked where the Saviour walked.

I remember an amusing incident that occurred which illustrates the interest some of our men

took in those far-off Bible times. It was at the conclusion of a particularly tiring march when I came across a little group of men resting beside the dusty road. Just as I got up one of them took a Bible from his pack and commenced turning over its pages. I overheard his pal say, "What was that plice we marched by ter-day, Tom; wasn't that where Joshuar went after them there fellers?" And the other, with withering scorn, replied, "Naah; that was where Absalom caught 'is 'ead in the bloomin' trees."

Our medical officer told me how, after he had explained to a dying soldier in his field ambulance at Bethlehem how sorry he was that he had no special comforts available to ease his last moments, the man, with a cheery grin, remarked: "Oh, that's all right, sir. Yer reads in the Bible as 'ow this 'ere 'Oly Land is flowin' with milk an' 'oney; but I 'aven't seen any 'oney myself, and in our battery there's fifteen men to a can o' milk!"

A battalion of the Royal Fusiliers came up on Christmas Eve to guard the plains below Jerusalem. This battalion was made up entirely of Jews, recruited in England, America and Palestine. It was nicknamed by our men the "Royal *Jews*iliers." It was also known as "The

Jordan Highlanders." Their battle-cry was said to be, "No advance without security." As a matter of fact they did remarkably fine work and possessed an extremely nice lot of officers.

I was in my tent on the Mount of Olives the afternoon of December 24th, and overheard a sergeant of mine say to a corporal: "I 'ear as how these 'ere Royal Jewsiliers are going to guard the plain, Corporal."

"Yes, Sergeant," replied the corporal.

"I'll bet the shepherds'll watch their flocks ter-night!" said the sergeant.

Before dawn on December 26th the Turks launched the expected counter-attack with the object of recapturing Jerusalem.

Eight times they hurled themselves against the 60th Division holding the Nablus road. We were forewarned, however, and massed in depth on a narrow front, our flanks lightly held by the 10th and 53rd Divisions; and so the big effort failed. Indeed, it but added to the defeat of the enemy, for after they had spent themselves in vain assaults at great cost of men and materials, we opened up with every gun in the corps area, advanced in force, and drove them well beyond Ram Allah to the north and out of artillery range of Jerusalem to the east, thus destroying their last chance of success.

February 13th we took over the Deir Ibu Obeid-Ras es Suffa-Hizmeh line from the 53rd Division, and on the fourteenth of the same month operation orders were issued for an attack on Jericho with the object of driving the enemy across the River Jordan.

Before the main attack could take place it was necessary to strengthen the line by the capture of a small village, directly to our front, known as Mukhmas or Mickmash.

Mickmash was on a high rocky hill. The brigade outpost line was on a chain of hills, too, and between us and the enemy ran a deep valley.

A frontal attack was decided upon; that is, supported by artillery and machine guns, the brigade was to advance down into the valley just before dawn, and take Mickmash from the front.

All orders were given out and the troops were getting what rest was possible before zero hour.

In his bivouac, by the light of a candle, the brigade major was reading his Bible. When the raid was first discussed the name Mickmash had seemed vaguely familiar, although he could not quite place it. Just as he was about to turn in for the night, however, he recollected and

thought he would look it up. He found what he was searching for in Samuel I, Chapters 13 and 14:

> And Saul and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Mickmash.
>
> Now it came to pass upon a day that Jonathan, the son of Saul, said unto the young man that bare his armour, "Come and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side," but he told not his father . . . And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone.
>
> And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over into the Philistine garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh.
>
> The forefront of the one was situate northward over against Mickmash, and the other southward against Gibeah.
>
> And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, "Come, and let us go over unto the garrison. . . .

"It may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."

And the major read on how Jonathan went through the pass, or passage, of Mickmash, between Bozez and Seneh, and climbed the hill dragging his armour-bearer with him until they came to a place high up, about "a half an acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plow"; and the Philistines who were sleeping awoke, thought they were surrounded by the armies of Saul, and fled in disorder, and "the multitude melted away." Saul then attacked with his whole army. It was a great victory for him; his first against the Philistines, and "so the Lord saved Israel that day, and the battle passed over unto Beth Aven."

The brigade major thought to himself: "This pass, these two rocky headlands and flat piece of ground are probably still here; very little has changed in Palestine throughout the centuries," and he woke the brigadier. Together they read the story over again. Then the general sent out scouts, who came back and reported finding the pass, thinly held by Turks, with rocky crags on either side, obviously Bozez and Seneh; whilst in the distance, high up in

Mickmash the moonlight was shining on a flat piece of ground just about big enough for a team to plough.

The general decided then and there to change the plan of attack, and instead of the whole brigade, one infantry company alone advanced at dead of night along the pass of Mickmash. A few Turks met were silently dealt with. We passed between Bozez and Seneh, climbed the hillside, and just before dawn, found ourselves on the flat piece of ground. The Turks who were sleeping awoke, thought they were surrounded by the armies of Allenby and fled in disorder.

We killed or captured every Turk that night in Mickmash; so that, after thousands of years, the tactics of Saul and Jonathan were repeated with success by a British force.

CHAPTER XIV.

Crossing the Jordan.

It took Joshua, commander-in-chief of the army of the Israelites, a week to capture Jericho. He marched his warriors round the city once a day for six days, his trumpeters blowing a continuous series of blasts on their rams' horns, whilst the remainder shouted with all their might. On the seventh day, when the wretched inhabitants imagined they were going to enjoy a day's rest, Joshua encircled the place *seven* times amidst the sounding of trumpets and shouts of the multitude, and the walls fell—or, as I believe, were pushed down by the infuriated people themselves, forced to listen for a whole week to such an appalling row.

It may be that they had some plan of burying in the falling masonry the leader Joshua and his "orchestra," but at any rate the Israelites triumphed.

It only took *us* a few hours to capture Jericho, but this was because the Turks were afraid of remaining there with the British army in the foothills and the River Jordan in their rear.

So they crossed the river and blew up and burned their bridges behind them. The Australian cavalry were the first British troops to enter Jericho. I stood on the Mount of Temptation and watched them defile down through the wilderness, out onto the plain where they reformed into squadrons and galloped in the direction of the village, for present-day Jericho is little more than that. Soon they were lost to view in a cloud of dust.

Jericho was at one time one of the most renowned cities of Palestine. The capital of the Valley of the Jordan, it was the only place of any real importance on that river's course.

After toiling for five hours or more down the long descent from Jerusalem over the dreary limestone hills and through almost total desolation, the eye is suddenly caught by the sight of a thread of cultivation at the bottom of a deep glen, the most romantic in the whole of Palestine. This thin green streak denotes the course of a mountain torrent, now called the Wadi Kelt, but undoubtedly the ancient Cherith of Bible times.

The wadi brings with it a narrow patch of vegetation extending onto the desert plain of the Jordan, and forming an oasis which embraces the collection of miserable hovels

known as the modern village of Jericho. The site of the ancient and wealthy city, accursed by Joshua, is actually about a quarter of a mile away, but all that remains now of that once prosperous palm-girt town is a small hill called Tel es Sultan and some interesting ruins.

Although no fighting actually took place in Jericho itself, the previous day witnessed fierce battles in the foothills and through the passes

To my brigade was given the task of storming Talaat ed Dumm, the rocky hill above the Good Samaritan's Inn; and this was successfully accomplished by 7.15 A. M. on February 20th, but not without serious casualties on both sides.

After the fall of Jericho and consequent withdrawal of the Turks, it was decided we should carry out a big raid in the mountains of Moab, across the Jordan, in order to assist the Arab army of Prince Feisal then advancing north up the eastern side of the Dead Sea; and, at the same time, cripple the enemy's lines of communication.

For this purpose a special composite force was formed, known from the name of its commander as "Shea's Group." It consisted of the 60th Division, Australian and New Zealand mounted troops, the camel corps, a battery of

heavy artillery, a brigade of mountain guns and two bridging trains, as well as certain light-armoured cars for patrol work in the valley.

We attempted a surprise crossing of the Jordan, and chose for this purpose a very dark night.

We called for volunteers to swim the river, so that we could get a rope over and commence the construction of a temporary pontoon bridge.

In normal times swimming the Jordan is quite a simple matter, for at no point is it very wide—indeed there are many places which are fordable, as Joshua quickly discovered. There is only one period in the whole year when crossing the Jordan is really difficult; namely, during the rainy season; and that, unfortunately, was precisely the time we had to carry it out. During and immediately after the rains the river becomes flooded and swollen to twice its normal size: a great brown torrent choked with trunks of trees and other refuse from above, swirling and tearing madly down towards the silent waters of the Dead Sea.

We got an enormous number of volunteers from which eight of the strongest and best swimmers were finally selected; these men, stripped to the skin, and with ropes tied around

their waists, entered the flooded stream, and attempted to fight their way over.

The Turks, either anticipating our plans, or becoming alarmed at the prolonged silence, lit huge fires of reeds and brushwood along the eastern bank, and commenced firing wildly with rifles and machine guns.

I was concealed in the scrub by the banks of the Jordan with two sections of my company, waiting for the first bridge to be thrown across, so that I could get my guns over to keep down the fire of the enemy and assist the subsequent crossing of the 180th Brigade. Swarms of noxious insects, disturbed by the fires, rose from the rushes and, settling on our bare legs, hands and faces, bit and stung us with the utmost ferocity.

The Turkish watch fires rose and fell, at times casting a lurid glare over the valley, at others lighting up the obscurity of the river and causing the naked bodies of the swimmers to stand out pale and golden as they hesitated for a moment to adjust the ropes before plunging into the dark, mud-laden waters that swirled with an eerie sighing towards the Dead Sea.

I could follow our swimmers on their perilous journey, for the small white patches their

shoulders made in contrast to the brown coloured river stood out clearly. I knew when a man was hit by a bullet or got into difficulties, because the small patch became a big one as the whole body came to the surface, was buffeted about in the current for a time, and then disappeared out of sight.

Now and then a white form would be dragged from the surf, insensible; but always another stood ready to take his place.

The sound of the torrent successfully drowned all noise save the spiteful ping of the bullets that cut into the river like a venomous hailstorm.

When all the eight had tried and failed, a young officer of the 2nd/19th London Regiment, a lieutenant named Jones, volunteered for the job. He was quite a youngster, but a splendid swimmer, and lucky, too. He managed to get across and fix his rope to the stunted trunk of a tree under the shelving bank of the Jordan. By this means the first flat-bottomed raft was ferried over. It contained thirty-two officers and men but unfortunately the Turks got direct fire on them and they all became casualties.

We were able to get the raft back again, however, and we filled it up once more.

After it had been across three times, we suc-

ceeded in getting one officer and a corporal over to the eastern bank. These, together with Jones, were sufficient to fix up the steel chains on to various trees, and so the first temporary bridge was built.

I quickly got my sections over and was busy selecting positions for my guns when I heard a voice that was familiar; although, as a matter of fact, at that time I had only heard it once before. But then it was a voice one does not easily forget—I think there are voices like that. I looked up and saw General Allenby standing with the Duke of Connaught, to whom he was explaining the plan of operations.

That the old duke, the king's uncle, should have been one of the first to cross the Jordan, had a tremendous effect in raising our spirits, for we had been experiencing rather a rough time these last few days.

The Valley of the Jordan is not one of the most desirable places at the best of times. It is 1300 feet below the level of the sea, and the lowest spot in the world in more senses than one; a cool day there corresponds to the hot room in a Turkish bath.

All day long we were tormented by millions of flies, and at night snakes and scorpions came

out from beneath the stones and got in between our blankets. A considerable number of men were bitten badly and some died.

One had to be very careful in dealing with a scorpion in one's bivouac at night. I found out it did not pay to annoy them, for any sudden movement or hasty action caused them to throw over their tails and bite. The best thing to do was to coax them to leave you, in as nice a manner as possible; but even this method did not always answer because the scorpion thought you had taken a fancy to him and came back again later, probably biting you in the end—so that it was really awfully difficult to know what to do for the best.

The Duke of Connaught, who came to Palestine to present a decoration to General Allenby after the capture of Jerusalem, was a sick man at the time, suffering from rheumatism and other complaints. He could have watched the fighting in perfect comfort and safety, with a strong pair of field glasses, from the kaiser's palace on the Mount of Olives which overlooks the Jordan Valley. That he should prefer to be with us and share our discomfort and dangers—for the Turk was sweeping the plain with rifle and machine gun fire, whilst every

now and then a shell exploded scattering shrapnel—was of course only to be expected from an old soldier like the duke.

The reason I mention it at all is that it is these little things that make us proud of the members of our royal family, who hold their places in our esteem not merely by virtue of tradition, but of true affection.

A commander-in-chief's work takes place *before* the attack; he makes his plans which are carried out by the corps and divisional commanders, and he really has very little to do during the actual fighting—providing, of course, that everything goes well. Allenby's plans were usually entirely successful, so that he was free to be up in the firing line to encourage us during any particularly trying operation. His nickname in the army is "the bull." He is a tremendous fellow, over six feet tall, with a voice that corresponds.

When he shakes hands his grip causes you to stretch your fingers for some little time afterwards. When he smiles his approval it makes you feel rather proud. I do not imagine people often attempt to deceive him. He has a combination of those qualities men admire most in a leader: personal bravery, knowledge of his

job and a consideration for the man in the ranks.

After a time we succeeded in enlarging our bridge-head, and the cavalry, now all safely across, galloped down a number of Turkish detachments, capturing a large quantity of prisoners and machine guns.

Not even when Joshua made his camp at Gilgal did the Jordan Plain hold such a mighty host. There were more than twenty thousand British and Australian troops on the plain, with almost as many horses and camels.

On the morning of March 24th a general advance took place; at first across the plain to the foothills at Shunet Nimrin, where we forced the pass, and then on up the steep mountain road to the picturesque Armenian village of Es Salt, some twenty miles from the River Jordan. Practically all enemy positions were taken at the point of the bayonet and we gained considerable first-hand knowledge of the personal bravery of the Turk as a fighting man.

Our cavalry were all this time striking across country further to the south, making for a point on the Hejaz railway which they hoped to blow up before the enemy could bring up sufficient forces to prevent them.

Owing to the nature of the country, only the lightest forms of artillery support could be counted on; so that to the infantry fell the major burden of the attack.

In places the rising ground was so steep men had to climb on each others' shoulders, just as we had done at Deir Yesin. Soon the going became so bad all wheel transport was withdrawn to Shunet Nimrin, where General Shea established his headquarters; the ammunition and supplies being transferred to camels.

Every moment was of value, and although we had now been marching and fighting continuously for four days, we pushed on beyond Es Salt, where the friendly villagers in their delight at being freed from the Turk welcomed us effusively.

Amman, a stronghold of the enemy, lay nine miles from Es Salt in a southeasterly direction.

The weather now changed, and it became bitterly cold. We felt it all the more severely after the enervating and oppressive warmth of the Jordan Valley. In a pitiless downpour men struggled on up the winding mountain passes of Moab, bowed down by the weight of saturated packs and with clothing and boots clogged with mud.

In places the wadis and nullahs were so steep the horses and mules had to be let down by ropes and hauled up the other side; whilst the camel leaders built roads as they went along, for the camel finds scaling the slippery sides of cliffs an utter impossibility.

Dispirited, worn out with fighting and scrambling all the way, the infantry at length arrived at Amman, 3500 feet above the Jordan Valley.

Without a pause for rest we attacked on March 28th.

Practically no artillery support was available; only two batteries of horse artillery having succeeded in getting their guns through the mud.

The battle went on for three days; wave after wave of infantry staggered forward in sodden clothes, worn out and weakened by lack of food, against an enemy that had had months to prepare impregnable positions, and was, of course, within easy reach of his supplies.

The weather changed from bad to worse. Our casualties became alarming; which was not to be wondered at considering we had to advance to the attack across a plain swept by rifle, machine gun and artillery fire, whilst the Turks, who had the advantage of position, were well dug in.

A great number of our men died from exposure. Our camels, too, were decreasing rapidly; a serious matter when it is remembered that not only were all supplies carried by camel, but sick and wounded men evacuated to the field hospital on the western side of the Jordan.

Finally it was decided to abandon the attempt to capture Amman, and orders were issued for a withdrawal of the whole force to the bridgehead.

On the third night of the battle our exhausted men began their long trek back to the Jordan, picking up on their way the garrisons at Es Salt and Shunet Nimrin together with hundreds of prisoners.

All bridges over the Jordan, save one, had been swept away by the river which, during our operations, had risen a further nine feet.

By 10 A. M., March 31st, all wounded had been evacuated; we left our dead in the hills, but vowed we would come back for them another time.

My brigade acted as rearguard and remained behind at Shunet Nimrin until all other units were safely across the Jordan. Brigadier-General Watson and myself were the last two in the foothills. As we galloped away the scouts of the enemy appeared over the crest of El Haud.

Our withdrawal from Amman brought home to me something of what refugees have to go through under war conditions. When the decision to evacuate the mountains of Moab was made known, it became necessary to notify our friends at Es Salt, who, had they remained, would undoubtedly have been massacred by the returning Turks for the help they gave us in our capture of the place.

Brigade headquarters were on the side of the Es Salt-Shunet Nimrin road.

From early dawn until late in the day one constant stream of miserable humanity passed on its way to the Jordan crossing. Throughout the war these people were kept short of the necessities of existence owing to demands for the Turkish army. Their young men were taken away to work behind the lines; those that remained—old men, women and children, half starved and loaded up like pack animals with the wretched sticks of furniture which were their only possessions in the world—set out to tramp the thirty odd miles that lay between the homes they were leaving, and safely within the British lines.

Donkeys and carts and other means of transport had been stolen from them months before,

so they were forced to carry all their belongings on their backs.

I saw one woman with a complete bed on her shoulders, tied on with ropes, the mattresses piled above; whilst on the very top of this colossal load a tiny child swayed backwards and forwards with every step the mother took.

Others carried chairs and even chests of drawers, and quite small boys staggered under sacks of corn and charcoal. Children little more than babies, toddled along barefoot, clinging to the women's skirts.

For the first ten miles or so they managed fairly well. Afterwards their feet were cut to ribbons on the sharp stones. They bound them hastily with strips of rag, torn from their garments; but the blood soaked through and as they dragged themselves along they printed crimson footmarks on the white mountain road.

Descending into the valley the heat increased, the rain had ceased and the sun blazed down, adding to their other hardships a raging thirst. Many of the children and some of the oldest people died. I saw one woman with a dead baby, herself weak from exhaustion, stagger to the side of the road, scratch with her bare hands a shallow grave, place the little body in, and after-

wards roll some heavy rocks over the place to keep the jackals away.

Long before the refugees arrived at Shunet Nimrin all their household treasures had been cast away, the problem now was how to last out themselves until safely across the Jordan. Fear of the Turk lent them a fictitious strength and they stumbled on.

Our kind-hearted men, themselves worn out, yet managed to help the children of these poor refugees. I noticed one young soldier coming down the pass. His feet were evidently giving him pain, for he supported himself along with a bivouac pole, his rifle slung over his left shoulder. His tunic was open right down the front, exposing his throat and chest. Ten days without shaving had allowed his beard to grow. His helmet was gone, in place of it he wore a blood-stained bandage round his forehead, his fair, curly hair showing above it like a golden halo.

He gazed straight before him, the sweat trickling from his face and running down his chest; his breath came in short low gasps.

Seated on his pack was a tiny child of perhaps three years of age, its bare legs hanging down either side of the valise whilst its arms were tightly clasped round the soldier's neck, the

hands meeting just under his chin like the knot of a scarf. Tired out, the child had fallen asleep, its delicate flower-like face resting against the man's sunburnt shoulder.

There is a parable in the Bible of the Good Shepherd and the lost sheep, which tells how "When he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing."

On the eleventh day after the commencement of our expedition into the mountains of Moab all survivors were safely west of the Jordan again.

History may record this raid on Amman as Allenby's one failure, and there is no doubt that, owing to unforeseen difficulties, we failed in carrying out all that was anticipated; nevertheless, as will be seen later, our crossing of the Jordan was largely instrumental in bringing the Palestine campaign to a successful conclusion.

CHAPTER XV.

Service.

"This month flies die; next month men die," was the warning dropped by a Turkish aeroplane flying over Jericho.

It was quite true. As the summer advanced the terrible heat in the Jordan Valley killed off the flies. I only wish it might have destroyed the scorpions, tarantulas, centipedes and snakes as well, for there were far too many of these pests to suit me.

In spite of the fact that we lost a large number of men from malignant malaria and other tropical diseases, we kept our grip on the crossings of the Jordan until we were prepared to go forward on the final advance that was destined to drive the Turks once and for all time from Palestine.

One afternoon, it was early in May before the really hot weather came, I lay in my bivouac feeling thoroughly limp and washed out. My boots and tunic were off, and my head was swathed in mosquito netting; which, whilst acting as a protection against insect bites, only succeeded in adding to the already insufferable heat.

Sweat gathered in large drops and trickled down the sides of my face. Occasionally a miniature whirlwind, rising suddenly without apparent cause, would fill the bivouac with sand and dust and hot air, and then just as quickly blow itself out again, leaving a stillness that could be felt.

A little hostile shelling had taken place during the morning; by four in the afternoon this had all died away. The sun shone incessantly, whilst waves of sticky humidity, rising from the jungle, formed a ground mist through which the stunted and grotesque shaped trees fringing the river banks showed vague and indistinct.

Thousands of flies, as if aware their days were numbered, clung to the inner surface of my bivouac, inert and lifeless.

A little after four o'clock Sale put his head under the flap to see if I required anything before he set out to fetch fresh water from the Jordan for my tea. He declined to make it from water that had stood in fanatis in the sun all day and was practically at boiling point already.

I lay with half-closed lids, too exhausted to rise, too hot to sleep, and idly listened to the sound of my servant's footsteps as he tramped away on his self-imposed task. They echoed on the sun-baked ground for awhile and then died

away in the distance. With his bandy legs and bad feet, it was rather like the uneven thumping of a tomtom heard far off. When all sound had really ceased, I imagined I heard them still, beating time in my brain just as the peculiar motion of a train or boat is sometimes felt long after the journey is over. There was individuality in everything Sale did. I felt positive I should be able to recognise the quaint sound of his footsteps even in a crowd, for they would bring back experiences that were indelibly photographed and docketed in my private storehouse of memories. I had heard him coming and going so many times, always it seemed on some errand connected with my comfort.

Henry Sale would never have made a soldier in the accepted sense of the term because he could not even *look* like a soldier, which in the army is half the battle. Neither was he of the type from which efficient servants come. He was too independent and possessed too much personality; yet, in spite of his unsuitability for the dual *role* for which fate had cast him, or strangely enough—possibly *because* of it, he succeeded in being the ideal soldier-servant.

Unconsciously I was growing very attached to him, although I dare say this feeling consisted to

a large extent in protective affection, such as a master feels for his favourite sporting dog, his companion in a hundred exciting adventures whose ears have been torn in badger fights and rat hunts at which both have been present.

* * * * * * *

Crump!!!

By Jove, that was a near one! I sprang from my bed; for, mingled with the noise of the bursting shell, I fancied I detected a call for help.

I pulled on my boots, not troubling to lace them. As I crawled from under my bivouac I instinctively looked in the direction from which the sound had come. A shell must have landed within 400 yards of my camp, a small cloud of smoke still hung in the stagnant air.

I ran rapidly over the ground, a nameless fear enveloping me. The cry for help was repeated, but more faintly this time; it gave a sharp tug at my heart, for it sounded very much like Sale's voice.

Soon I arrived at where the explosion had taken place; the smell of gases and hot metal, together with the unmistakable scent of blood, filled the air.

My poor servant lay on his back. Both legs had been blown off, and there were terrible

wounds in other parts of his body. One shattered leg, still encased in remnants of a puttee, was near the body; the other must have been blown to pieces, for I could not see it anywhere. A splintered rifle lay by his side, also a canvas water bucket, torn by fragments of shell and spattered with blood.

There was a look of pathetic surprise on his face. He was evidently quite conscious. The shell had cauterised the wound and destroyed a nerve center, so that at present he was not feeling the full agony—that would come later.

For the fraction of a second I stood stock still, and it passed through my mind that the scene I was gazing upon was unreal, fantastic! I could not believe it was true. I had seen many men die in action and I ought to have been thoroughly hardened, but somehow this seemed different.

After the first shock of explosion everything had become abnormally quiet again, no sign of life apparent anywhere; seemingly the whole camp was resting still. It was difficult to realise that a messenger of death had so recently arrived in this silent valley. Could it be possible that this mutilated being—whose eyes, with pupils like pin pricks, gazed into mine in such a startled questioning kind of way—was my bat-

man; or was fate playing some terrible trick with my imagination?

Sale, the dependable, commonplace Sale, who never did unusual things, transformed into a legless horror!

Two of my signallers came running up. I sent one for an ambulance and told the other to take off his coat and hold it over the dying man's face to keep the burning sun off.

I knelt down and gripped my servant's hand in mine, and with my other hand I tried to keep the flies away. I could feel the clammy death sweat between his palm and mine, but had a curious belief my clasp would keep him alive, at least for a time.

I gave him some water from my waterbottle, but it was so hot from the rays of the sun that he could not drink it and spat it out again.

There seemed nothing I could do for the man who had done so much for me!

When he spoke his voice was full and strong.

"I'm going to die, sir," he said. "I hope it won't put you out very much! Private 'Ughes knows how you like your tea made, I think he would make you a good servant when I'm gone —all your things are washed and in your bag." And then he tried to twist his poor maimed body

over to get at my keys, which he always kept in his hip pocket.

"Don't worry about that," I said.

"All right, sir," he answered. "You can get 'em when I've gone West." Then, with a little catch in his voice: "I'd like you to write to my wife, sir, and give her my love—if you will? The poor lass'll be lonely like, and I don't know what she'll do with the shop—she was trying to keep it open till I came home again."

I pressed his hand; I could not speak, but he understood; I could see it in his eyes; he knew that I would write.

Then Captain Leslie, the medical officer, arrived with the ambulance. As he was unfastening the strap round a small leather satchel containing "first aid" he glanced at Sale, then shook his head to me, as though to say: "This case is quite hopeless, I can do nothing!"

"For God's sake do *something*," I whispered. "He's my batman; can't you give him morphia to make him unconscious before the pain comes?"

Captain Leslie dressed his terrible wounds as best he could; then we all helped to lift him, first onto the canvas stretcher, then on the stretcher into the motor ambulance.

I stood with clenched fists as the final adjustments were made and prayed the morphia might take effect soon.

Before the tailboard was closed down I bent over Sale and said:

"Good-by, Harry; thank you for all you've done for me. God bless you!"

It was the first time I had ever called him by his Christian name, yet it seemed the most natural thing in the world to do.

Then noticing there was a second wounded man in the car, and hardly knowing what else to say, I added:

"There's another fellow going down with you."

"That's nice; it'll be company. Good-night, sir!" said Private Sale, cheerful to the last.

I watched the ambulance disappear completely out of sight; it bumped and swayed from side to side over the uneven ground.

Leslie shook my hand, murmured something about being awfully sorry and hurried off. The signaller saluted stiffly and went away without speaking. They both looked curiously blurred and shadowy. I put my hand to my eyes and found they were wet.

I returned to camp. As I passed the cook-

house the earthenware teapot Sale bought for me in Jerusalem because I disliked tea made in a dixie, caught my eye. Later on I was handed a message received by 'phone to say that Private Sale had died on his way to the dressing station. I sat on my bed, the flimsy message form crumpled in my hand. To-morrow I would have to write to Mrs. Sale and break the news. My letter would travel the selfsame way the dead man and myself had come, filled with hope and enthusiasm for the Great Adventure, so long ago.

Back to Jerusalem, along the winding Jaffa road to Ludd, then across the Desert of Sinai to Kantara where the state railway would receive it and bring it through Egypt to the port of Alexandria. Here a returning troopship would pick it up, and so over the sun-lit Mediterranean, past ancient Salonika, to Italy, on to France, via Marseilles and Cherbourg, and across the channel to Southampton, then through the center of England to the little butcher's shop in Lancashire.

It seemed a long way to go just to break a woman's heart, but other letters to other wives would keep it company, travelling on similar errands.

I threw myself on my bed fully dressed, and

lay there with my eyes open but seeing nothing. My head ached, I felt dead tired, but could not sleep. Life seemed very hard and cruel—why could not this one man have been spared?

The hours passed and the moon rose, stealing in through the opening of my bivouac. Sale always came round last thing and fastened down the flap.

Jackals, in search of food, commenced their hideous howling. I put both hands over my ears to shut out the sound. Surely they were making more row than usual to-night—why?

Then I understood. I recalled the mother beside the Es Salt road, digging a grave for her dead baby, and it came to me in a flash why the jackals bayed to-night—they had scented fresh blood.

I dragged myself from my bed and went out into the moonlight. It was as clear as daylight. I searched for a short time amongst the piles of equipment lying outside headquarter's bivouacs, finally selecting an entrenching tool—then I hurried on. I had no difficulty in finding the exact spot. I knelt down and began hacking away with my pick at the hard ground.

Sparks flew as I came across stones, but I drove in the steel head all the harder. I worked

like a madman, with feverish eagerness; the sweat ran from my face—sometimes it got in my eyes and nearly blinded me. As I loosened stones I tore them up with my hands, breaking the nails. I welcomed the pain, for at last I had found some task I could carry out that would repay a little of the debt I owed.

Soon I succeeded in excavating a hole sufficiently deep for my purpose. The jackals howled incessantly; let them howl!—I would baulk them of their hellish meal to-night.

I picked up my old servant's mutilated foot; the moonlight fell on the sole of the army boot, turning it to silver. The leather was thin, almost as thin as paper. Only two months ago Sale had been fitted out with new boots at the quartermaster's store; I remembered it well, for a consignment of new boots was a rare occurrence. Now those thick soles were practically worn through. The cause?—a thousand errands for me willingly executed, and how many miles marched under a burning sun with never a complaint?

"Fair wear and tear" is an expression we use in the army when exchanging worn-out articles of kit. Had I always given my man fair wear and tear, I wondered?

Gently I placed the remains in my little grave, carefully filling in the loose earth and stones; then, kneeling beside the mound, I prayed for strength and comfort for the widow of my soldier servant.

I poured out all that was in my heart to God that night, in the desolate Jordan Valley, and I believe He heard me; for the weight that had clamped my brain was lifted and when I got back and removed my clothes, bathed my hands and face in the bucket of water beside my bed and crept in between the coarse army blankets, sleep and peace came almost as soon as my head touched the pillow.

* * * * * * *

Private Sale is buried on the Mount of Olives; his simple soldier grave looks down on the Holy Sepulchre.

When I took the letters and keepsakes from his pockets to send home to his widow, I found my old identity disc that I had given him to throw away, two years before, when I got my promotion. I suppose he kept it for luck, or perhaps in memory of "his officer."

He never won a medal for bravery or got a "mention in despatches"—he was just one of the

many, many thousands who gave their lives for their country in the war that was fought to end all wars.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Final Victory.

General Allenby's plan of operations for the final advance, timed to commence in September, 1918, was roughly as follows.

It was known our raids into the mountains of Moab had led the enemy to anticipate our big effort would come from the Jordan Valley, where he retained a large force to oppose us; consequently it was decided to secretly move the greater part of our army from east to west across Palestine, leaving but the skeleton of a line to guard our right flank. Colonel Lawrence, organiser of the Arab troops of Hussein, King of the Hejaz, reported good progress made across the eastern Desert, so that any eventuality should find our right flank well secured.

Divisions were to be concentrated on the Maritime Plain with the whole might of our cavalry massed in rear; then, on a day to be decided upon later, the infantry, under cover of a short artillery bombardment, would rush forward and force a gap in the Turkish front, sufficiently large for the cavalry to get through.

The mounted troops had orders that, once through, they were to ride with all speed so as to encircle, if possible, the entire Turkish army west of the Jordan. In the meantime the infantry would right wheel on a sixteen-mile front, from Rafat to the sea, driving the enemy into the hills of Samaria, where he would find all avenues of retreat cut off by the cavalry.

General Allenby was strongly of opinion that a decisive victory on the eastern front would greatly assist in smashing the resistance of the Central Powers in France. That this reasoning was sound was fully borne out by after events, for the collapse of Turkey quickly brought Bulgaria to her knees, followed by Austria who sued for peace, thus leaving Germany to face ~~certain~~ defeat alone.

Had we been able to retain our force in Palestine intact there is no question but that the operations we carried out in September would have taken place six months earlier, possibly shortening the duration of the war by that period. By the early part of the spring of 1918, however, events in France had reached an acute crisis; Haig's army literally had its back to the wall, and reinforcements from all other British fronts were urgently needed to stem the German tide.

Some of our best divisions were hurriedly shipped to France. In place of these veteran soldiers we were given untrained Indian troops with no knowledge of modern fighting methods. It meant practically the re-making of our army before we could take the field again with any hope of success.

Luckily we were left with sufficient seasoned men to leaven the whole, but it was gruelling work carrying out intensive training all through the torrid summer months of 1918.

The 60th Division was reduced to one white battalion to a brigade, the remaining nine battalions consisting of young Indian recruits.

I must say our new comrades turned out keen soldiers, quick and eager to learn; but we naturally missed the old cheery battalions who had fought side by side with us for over three years. The Indians suffered from homesickness just at first; later on they settled down and were quite content to be in Palestine.

Very quaint and curious were the petitions for leave they put in. These documents, often of great length, were written in Hindustani and translated by Babus into English. I remember one I had submitted to me which read as follows:

Honoured and highly esteemed lord and master, friend of the lowly.

I wish to journey to India for the following satisfying and splendid reasons:—

Undesirable neighbours have burnt my crops, and my children are very sick.

Elephants have pulled down my house and I desire to visit the forest to obtain fresh trees with which to rebuild it.

A bad man has stolen my wife and killed my venerable father.

Otherwise, everything is all right.

In spite of this harrowing tale I did not see my way clear to grant the leave asked for; I was to some extent reassured by the underlying optimism of the last paragraph, however.

Before we commenced the great move from the Jericho front to the Maritime Plain we constructed camouflage camps to deceive the Turkish airmen. We put up dummy tents, horse lines and ration dumps. We even made dummy horses from brown army blankets and bivouac poles. We left behind convalescent soldiers and men unable to march, with orders to light camp fires and now and then fire off salvos from the Turkish guns we had captured in the earlier part of the campaign. For some days before the

exodus we marched small bodies of men towards Jericho, trailing boughs of trees and thus raising clouds of dust. Empty lorries constantly ran back and forth between Jerusalem and Jericho.

That the enemy was thoroughly deceived by all this we found out later from captured army documents, which reported heavy concentrations of British troops in the Valley of the Jordan and the arrival of reinforcements, at the very time we were moving the greater part of the army in the opposite direction. Although complete divisions of infantry and thousands of mounted troops, together with guns, transport and supplies, passed right across the country—the enemy never knew, for we always marched by night and rested during the day hidden in olive and almond groves.

By September 18th all troops were in position waiting for zero day. The 60th Division was on the extreme left of the line next the Mediterranean.

It was our task to make the gap for the cavalry, and we had been specially lent to the 21st Corps for this purpose. We felt highly honoured at this fresh indication of the commander-in-chief's approval; for had we not been selected to storm Beersheba, to take the fortifica-

tions of Jerusalem, capture Jericho, and cross the Jordan? And now we were to be given the place of honour in what all felt instinctively would be the last phase of the war in the Holy Land.

Latest type aeroplanes had recently arrived in Egypt from England, and our airmen were looking forward with the greatest eagerness to the approaching conflict; but none were keener than the cavalry, for Allenby's plans would give them the opportunity for which they had been waiting—of proving to the world that they were as much needed in modern warfare to-day as they had been in wars of the past.

The September advance in Palestine saved the cavalry from utter extinction, placing them securely back in their rightful position as indispensable in open fighting and a war of movement.

All preparations for the great day were carried on at night. We took what rest was possible during the hours of daylight and were not allowed to stir from our quarters. Directly night fell, and we were free from enemy observation, the whole army sprang into life, and that great world that exists behind the firing line seethed with strenuous activity.

Road makers and railway workers were busy in their thousands. A constant stream of supply wagons and lorries ran all night piling up huge stores of shells and small arms ammunition behind the front. Special officers were stationed at all crossroads, and we worked strictly to time; the clock was our taskmaster. The traffic scheme was splendidly worked out and never a hitch occurred.

During this time our water supply was developed to an almost unbelievable extent. Wells were dug wherever there was any sign of a yield; along the beach alone forty-five were sunk, each of them giving forth about three thousand gallons a day.

We laid a pipe line near Jelil which supplied us with 20,000 gallons of water hourly. Certainly one of the richest legacies we left to Palestine was the improved water supply. The first flush of dawn above the jagged Judean hills was the signal for instant cessation of all work. The British front became again as silent as the grave; it was difficult to realise that every road and track had been so recently black with traffic, that thousands of troops and tons of stores had been moved from one part of the front to another, and many batteries of guns dragged by tractors from the Jordan front to the Maritime Plain.

Every order issued by the commander-in-chief was carried out with exactitude and enthusiasm. I wonder if there was ever an army before with such complete confidence in its leader as we all had in Allenby.

The operation orders issued were clear and definite. We had to break through the enemy's defences between the railway and the sea, to open a way for the cavalry, and at the same time seize the foot-hills southeast of Jiljulieh. The 21st Corps was then to swing to the right, on the line Hableh-Tul Keram, and then advance in a northeasterly direction through the hills, converging on Samaria and Attara, so as to drive the enemy up the Messudie-Jenin road into the arms of the cavalry at El Afule.

At 4.30 A. M., September 19th, there began an intense bombardment of the Turkish positions by three hundred of our guns, and lasting fifteen minutes.

The sound of the first gun was our signal to advance; and our men dashed forward at such a rate, that by 4.40 A. M. part of the enemy's line was already in our hands. The 60th Division had to drive the Turks from three lines of trenches near the coast north of Arsuf, the place where Richard the Lion-hearted gained a victory over the Saracens in 1191.

We attacked on a one-brigade front, the honour falling to my brigade, the 180th.

Soon we forced a gap sufficiently wide for the cavalry, and they came thundering through, riding for their lives, for every minute counted.

It would take another volume to describe all the fighting that followed, and indeed this story does not claim to be a history of the Palestine campaign, but merely the personal adventures of the author.

Suffice it to say that in thirty-six hours, between 4.30 A. M., September 19th, and 5 P. M., September 20th, the greater part of the 8th Turkish Army had been overwhelmed, and the troops of the 7th Army were in full retreat through the hills of Samaria, whose exits were already in the hands of our cavalry.

Infantry pressed on and drove the retreating army into the arms of the cavalry, as had been anticipated; with the result that practically the whole of the 7th and 8th Turkish Armies were captured with their guns and transport.

Then followed the capture of Haifa and Acre (it was at Acre that Richard I landed on the third crusade), the occupation of Tiberias and of the country to the south and west of the Sea of Galilee.

As the result of the rout of the 7th and 8th Armies, the 4th Turkish Army, east of the Jordan, began retreating, thoroughly disorganised.

Then the Desert Mounted Corps advanced on Damascus, capturing the remnants of the 4th Turkish Army on the way.

Finally our troops reached Homs and Tripoli and the cavalry advanced on Aleppo which was occupied on October 26th.

Between September 19th and October 26th we captured 75,000 prisoners, about 4000 of these being either German or Austrian. We also secured practically all the enemy's guns, transport and supplies.

October 31st, the anniversary of our attack on Beersheba, the Turks, with all their armies destroyed or captured, and Palestine and Syria wrested from them, asked for an armistice, the terms of which amounted to unconditional surrender.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Crusader's Tower.

One hears various opinions expressed as to the Turk's fitness to govern in Europe, the most general and popular one being that he is by no means as black as he is usually painted.

A great many are influenced in coming to this favourable decision by the bravery, picturesqueness and charming manners of the average Turk; for the Turkish *effendi* certainly possesses charming manners. He is highly educated and most hospitable; he will invite you to dinner, for instance, load you with honours and attentions, bid you farewell with his hand on his heart, and quite possibly give orders for your assassination as you leave his house.

The Turkish fighting man, and by this I mean the man in the ranks, is extremely brave, long-suffering, patient, cruel and stupid, with all the charm and defects of a backward child.

The Turkish official is overbearing, suave, extortionate and conscienceless, with a complete knowledge of the psychology of the eastern mind.

One may condemn or admire these qualities

at will, but when dispassionately considering the qualifications of the Turk as governor of a civilised country, one example alone is sufficient to condemn him—namely, Palestine!

The Turk ruled Palestine for over four hundred years; yet four days after the British army drove him out, all that remained as a reminder of his long presence there was a land, once prosperous, now stripped and starved; and a people, once happy and contented, now crushed by oppression and weakened by disease and privations.

Turkish rule in Europe has always been that of an army of occupation, conferring no lasting benefit on the nation forced by strength of arms to submit to its dictation.

Five hundred years ago much of the present barren territory was covered with great forests. Writers of the period of the Crusades describe the forests of Northern Sharon and other places: the word for wood occurs in place names where trees are now unknown, as in Judaea. Enormous roots can be seen to this day, even on the bare plateau of Judaea. Palm groves have disappeared from the Jordan Valley, and yet Jericho in Bible times was known as the City of Palms.

Under the Ottoman regime everything that could be taxed was taxed to the uttermost to enrich the coffers of the sultan and those whom the sultan delighted to honour; even the trees were taxed. Consequently the country is practically barren of trees to-day. Almond, olive and fig trees remain because their produce was sufficient to pay the taxes and leave a little over for the wretched owners, but all other stately forest trees, invaluable for tempering the climate and affording shelter to cattle, were ruthlessly cut down and used as firewood.

During four centuries of Turkish occupation Jerusalem had no real water supply, and no attempt was made to develop the natural resources available in other parts of the country.

In Roman times a magnificent stone aqueduct, the ruins of which still remain, brought a plentiful supply of water to the Holy City. Under Turkish administration the people were forced to catch the rain that fell during the winter months on the flat roofs of their houses and store it in tanks in the cellars, where it became foul and polluted as the summer advanced. During the hot weather native water carriers obtained water from King Solomon's pools and brought it, in unsanitary skin gourds, to Jerusalem,

where they sold it in the streets to all who could afford to pay for it. Is it to be wondered at, that under these conditions the death rate amongst the children was twelve times as high as in any other civilised city in the world?

Two months after the British entered Jerusalem, the Holy City was in possession of a water supply it had been denied by the Turks for over four hundred years!

Our Royal Engineers laid many miles of pipe lines from the springs in the Hebron hills and erected a powerful pumping station; so that by June 18, 1918, every man, woman and child in the city could obtain as much pure health-giving water as they required without paying a penny. Immediately the death rate began to drop, and when I left Palestine in 1920, it had become normal for any semi-tropical city.

One of our biggest undertakings, of which little has been heard, was the building of the roads which now intersect the country. They were intended primarily for military purposes in order that heavy guns and supply lorries could be readily moved from one part of the front to another, but they will nevertheless undoubtedly prove of the greatest value to Palestinians in marketing their produce in

peace times, and should make life more pleasant for the tourist than it has been in the past.

In building these roads we were enabled to give employment and assistance to thousands of destitute people—indeed the entire population of a town or village would turn out *en masse* and work on the highways. Whole families worked together, even the smallest children carrying stones graded to suit their capabilities. It was an interesting sight to watch these people under the direction of our officers and native overseers chosen from amongst themselves. Like swarms of industrious white ants they carried rocks from the surrounding countryside to where the new road was being constructed, thus serving a double purpose; for, as the land was cleared of obstacles, wandering tribes of Arabs appeared as if by magic and began to sow with seed the ground thus made available for cultivation. With an excellent organisation and willing and unlimited labour supply, the roads progressed rapidly. The workers sang as they laid the bed of the road; for they were getting good food and good money, many of them for the first time in their lives.

We established fully equipped hospitals for

local inhabitants in all large cities, and instituted an infants' welfare bureau in Jerusalem which was a big success; we also opened a kitchen to provide food for babies and the poor of the city.

The head of the American Red Cross in Palestine described our progress as "the civilising march of the British Army." Coming from one who understood so thoroughly the difficulties that had to be overcome, it was praise worth having.

For over a year after the armistice I stayed on with our army of occupation. I was now free to go where I would, and I took full advantage of the liberty. I rode in a luxurious army car over roads that had seemed endless when we marched and fought our way along them a few months before, but which now flashed by in an amazingly short space of time.

I spent long, interesting days in Jerusalem steeping myself anew in all its wonderful history and romance.

I bathed at Jaffa, visited the orange groves and cantered past the thriving Jewish colony at Richon which stands on the hills above Bir Salem, where Allenby's headquarters used to be. I dined with my old divisional general, now

General Sir John Shea, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., and also dined with a sheik on goat's flesh in a camel-hair tent on the plains near Tul Keram. I played golf on links we made ourselves in the Desert with mud greens, and rode with Prince Feisal's Arab soldiers over the hills outside Damascus.

Sometimes I wandered through the twilight dimness of the bazaars in Damascus, full of the odours of spices, rich with gorgeous colours, and chequered with the bright pattern of brilliant sunshine that filtered through rents in the overhanging matting. I watched Bedoueen glide spectrally along with wild roving eyes like startled deer, and children, more beautiful than any in the East, play in the living mazes of the crowd.

I sipped sherbet of roses cooled with snow from the Lebanons, and drank Mocha coffee in quaint silver cups.

One day I rode through the wheat fields by a bridle path, climbing from Esdraelon to the rocky foot-hills through thick brush and scrub with undergrowth of large purple thistles, mallows with blossoms like pelargoniums, stocks of hollyhocks, honeysuckle and convolvulus; then, between the shoulders of the mountains into the

cool of the dull green olive groves, with just a pause for a moment in which to gaze back over the moorland where a million flowers were scattered, poppies, pimpernels, anemones, the mallow, the narcissus and blue iris, "roses of Sharon and lilies of the valley." Strange to think that some of the fiercest battles of the world had taken place there; that Thotmes, Rameses, Sennacherib, Cambyses, Alexander, Pompey Titus, Saladin, Napoleon and many another led his armies where Allenby led us!

It was harvest time when I received my orders for demobilisation.

The afternoon before I left Palestine for Egypt, en route to England, I climbed to the top of the Crusader's tower near Ramleh. It is known as the Church of Forty Martyrs, and is all that now remains of the stately pile that Richard's warriors built to the glory of God so many centuries ago.

Nearby is the burial place of England's patron saint, St. George, martyred at Ludd in the year 303.

I wanted to be alone; I wanted to think for a time of all that had happened since the day when I first set foot in France. The war had called me and I had become a soldier. For over four years I had been constantly with men I

had learnt to admire and trust. From second lieutenant I had become a major; many of my friends had been killed or disabled for life; I had been through the horrors of a great war but had experienced much of its romance and adventure. I stood in the tower and turned my back on the Mediterranean Sea, looking towards where the Jaffa road, like a white ribbon, winds its way up into the hills of Jerusalem. We had fought over every mile of the way, but now the country was at peace and the people were free to return to their homes.

In the fields below me they were gathering in the harvest, Christians, Jews, Moslems, Syrians, Bedoueen, Arabs—all gathering in the golden grain.

The air was filled with bees and butterflies, and small birds whose sweet song was periodically hushed as a great hawk hovered overhead.

In the distance I could hear a military band at divisional headquarters playing the latest popular dance tune; nearer an Arab boy was playing on his reed flute as he drove his goats to water. We had finished our crusade, peace and freedom were in the Holy Land for the first time for five hundred years—and it all seemed worth while.

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